DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 374 656 FL 022 251

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TITLE Living and Working in Japan: A Study of American English Teachers.
PUB DATE Aug 93
NOTE 88p.; Master's Thesis, School for International Training, Brattleboro, Vermont.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Masters Theses (042) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Acculturation; Adjustment (to Environment); Cultural Awareness; Cultural Context; *Culture Conflict; Elementary Secondary Education; *English (Second Language); Foreign Countries; Higher Education; Japanese; *Language Attitudes; *Language Teachers; *Teacher Attitudes; *Teacher Motivation; Work Attitudes; Work Environment
IDENTIFIERS *Japan

ABSTRACT

A study investigated the motivation and perceptions of 16 Americans teaching English as a Second Language in Japan. Data were gathered by oral interview, and the questions asked focused on: initial motivation for coming to Japan; motivation to extend the length of stay; proficiency in Japanese at the beginning of the stay and currently; reasons for studying or not studying Japanese; working conditions and attitudes; lifestyle outside work and satisfaction with this aspect of life; attitudes toward Japan and the Japanese; cultural adaptation strategies, or strategies for existing without significant adaptation; feelings about one's role as a foreigner in Japanese society; and reactions to the strategies, attitudes, and behaviors of other foreigners living in Japan. The research was not quantitative, but trends emerged among interviewees. Responses are summarized and illustrated with comments and stories told by the interviewees. Overall, it was found that most were relatively satisfied with their situations, and that factors unrelated to Japan or Japanese culture were often most significant in determining satisfaction. The interview questionnaires, some culture-related quotations, and brief reference lists are appended. (MSE)

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ED 374 656

SCHOOL FOR INTERNATIONAL TRAINING

LIVING AND WORKING IN JAPAN:
A STUDY OF AMERICAN ENGLISH TEACHERS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE MASTER OF ARTS IN TEACHING DEGREE
AT THE SCHOOL FOR INTERNATIONAL TRAINING,
BRATTLEBORO, VERMONT

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BY

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TOKYO, JAPAN

AUGUST 1993

FL022251

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This project by Lisa J. Rennie is accepted in its present form.

Date _____

Project Advisor _____

Project Reader _____

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to my interviewees for sharing more than I would have dared to ask, to Alex Silverman and Kim Fine for their advice and support, to Doug Braymen for making me think harder than I wanted to, and to Jenny Harry for sharing her editorial wisdom.

ABSTRACT

This study is an analysis of research on what initially motivates American teachers of English to come to Japan and why some choose to stay for three years or more. The research consisted of oral interviews with 16 Americans who came to Japan as teachers of English, 14 of whom continue to teach and two of whom have moved into educational publishing. Analysis of the interviews focuses on: reasons for choosing Japan as a place to live and work; proficiency in and attitudes toward the Japanese language; perceptions of the role of non-Japanese in Japanese society.

The sample group was a sample of convenience, i.e. interviewees accessible to the researcher, rather than a scientifically selected sample. The conclusions drawn are, therefore, judgmental rather than statistical, and can be applied only to the sample group. It is, however, hoped and believed that the researcher's analysis of the interviews reveals insights into the motivations and cultural adaptation processes of long-term American residents of Japan from the field of English teaching.

ERIC Descriptors:

Major Descriptors

* acculturation
* English (second language)
* Japan
* language teachers
* motivation
* teacher attitudes

Minor Descriptors

language attitudes
role perception

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I. INTRODUCTION

All that follows is based on the premise that human beings tend to form communities. At various stages of one's life, the community with which one identifies most strongly may be that of immediate family, one's ethnic group, a group of persons with similar hobbies or interests, fellow students or workers, or any one of a number of other groups. Despite a widespread image of Americans as being fiercely independent, I believe that the majority of us seek and perhaps even thrive on the security and support of membership in some group. A need for independence does not necessarily preclude a need to belong.

At 29, I am single and live far from my immediate family. Still, I am able to maintain a strong feeling of community with my family members. On an emotional and spiritual level, they are and will always be the people I can count on to support me under any circumstances. I feel confident, too, that my close friends in the U.S.A. continue to be, despite the distance between us, an important source of caring and support in my life. Yet, for support in my day-to-day existence, I have had to seek out another community, as my family and friends are far from me, both geographically and in their ability to understand and relate to my current situation.

As an English teacher in Tokyo, Japan, I find myself identifying most strongly with a group I will hereafter refer to as "the international community." By this I mean the group of persons who, for a wide variety of reasons, have chosen to leave their native countries to live for extended periods abroad. For me, this group includes members of the chorus I sing in, the theater group I work with, my colleagues, and the Tokyo teaching community. These sub-groups within the international community combine to form an invaluable web of personal and professional support. They are made up of people who understand my

love for languages, my fascination with personal and cultural differences, and my need to interact with cultures other than my own. They are people who can relate to bouts of loneliness and homesickness and understand that those sadnesses do not mean that I should go home permanently. They, too, have experienced the painful realization that many people at home do not really want to hear the details of our lives overseas. Some of these people are quite firmly settled in Japan; others are, like me, full-time members of no culture – neither the one they have come to live in nor the one they have left behind. This group that I now identify with most closely is comprised of individuals who have chosen to leave the immediate support of their own national cultures. Whether this reflects a desire to move away from aspects of life at home, a wish to move toward something we feel we can find abroad, or a combination of the two, our choice inevitably isolates us to some degree from our own and other cultures, and is the bond that brings us together as a community.

After nearly two years in Japan, I find I am still very pleased to have made the decision to come here. I enjoy interacting, to the extent that I am able, with Japanese culture, and feel grateful for the supportive international community in which I find myself. Yet, before coming, of course I did not know that this is what I would find. Knowing nothing of the culture or of the international community here, I certainly had no guarantee that such contentment was attainable. When I began researching the possibility of coming, primarily by talking with friends and acquaintances who had lived and worked in Japan, the first word I learned in Japanese was *gaijin* – literally translated, "outside person". I was considering moving myself and my aforementioned need for belonging to a country where I would be referred to as the one who does not belong on the inside. Having once lived in France for a year, where I spoke the language, had French friends, and felt I had in certain respects integrated and become a part, if not 100% a member, of my surroundings, I was apprehensive about taking a leap in the opposite direction. I no longer recall exactly

how I reached the decision; I suspect, though, that had two close friends not decided to accept the same job that had been offered to me, I might very possibly have rejected the offer as well.

In the months preceding my departure for Japan, I heard the term *gaijin* from so many people that I initially planned to focus solely on this word in my research. I wondered what it really meant from a Japanese point of view, and from the point of view of non-Japanese identified in this way. What were the connotations beyond the simple translation to "foreigner"? What exactly were the ramifications for English teachers living as *gaijin* in Japan?

Since that time, my focus has broadened. I had clearer ideas when I began my research of what it meant to be a *gaijin* here, based on my own experience and my first-hand observation of other teachers. My fascination with the situation of English teachers in Japan had extended beyond simply their role as *gaijin*. My interest grew from the following observations, which repeatedly came to my attention:

Most teachers I had met agreed that they felt and expected always to feel like outsiders in Japanese society.

It seemed not at all uncommon for teachers to make little or no attempt to learn Japanese even after living here for a number of years.

Many teachers seemed to find Japanese people frustrating if not infuriating to work for/with.

Complaining about Japanese people, their country, and their culture seemed to be a way of life even for teachers who had been here for years and years by their own choice.

These were, of course, completely subjective observations, and not a sufficient base for drawing conclusions or making generalizations. Nonetheless, they intrigued me, and brought me back time and again to the simple question "If people are really so unhappy here, why don't they leave?" (Further on, in the analysis of the data, I shall call into

question this assumption on my part that the four observations cited above are indicative of unhappiness.)

It was in search of an answer to this and related questions that I conducted my research, interviewing a group of 16 Americans to learn about their motivations for coming here as English teachers, their experiences living in this country, and their reasons for staying. Though I had set out to prove no particular hypothesis, I assumed that my research would enable me to identify the specific characteristics of Japan and Japanese culture that cause these people to feel and act in a certain way. (i.e., "Because Japan is like X, people tend to do/feel Y.")

The interviewing process indeed provided fascinating insights into the attitudes and behaviors of 16 unique individuals. It was, however, the character of each individual rather than the character of Japan that appeared most strongly to dictate those attitudes and behaviors. Though the research was not quantitative in nature, certain trends emerged among interviewees. These trends will emerge in the following analysis, where I suspect the reader will find answers not to the question "How has Japan affected these 16 interviewees?" but rather "How have these 16 people of varied backgrounds and personalities responded to and coped with the challenges of living and working in Japan?"

II. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY*

What was the research focus?

The purpose of the research was to identify the factors motivating American teachers of English to come to Japan to live and work, and to examine aspects of their lives and work in Japan that have lead them to stay in the country for at least three years. I focused on the following areas in gathering information from interviewees:

- Initial motivation to come to Japan
- Motivation to extend the length of stay
- Proficiency in Japanese at the beginning of the stay and at present
- Reasons for studying or not studying the language
- Working conditions and attitude toward work
- Lifestyle outside work and degree of satisfaction with this aspect of life
- Attitude toward Japan and the Japanese
- Cultural adaptation strategies, or strategies for existing without significant adaptation
- Feelings about one's role as a foreigner in Japanese society
- Reactions to the strategies, attitudes and behaviors of other foreigners living in Japan

*Structure of the Research Design and Methodology is adapted from Johnson 1992

In what context was the research conducted?

As this was an independent project, the research was designed and executed solely by the author, with input at regular intervals from the Project Advisor and Project Reader. It is worthwhile to note constraints on the research process caused by the fact that the research was not funded by any outside source. As interviewees could not be offered any financial or other compensation for their time and contributions, there was sometimes pressure to proceed quickly through certain elements of the questioning. Responses may in some cases have been affected by an interviewee's desire to be quick and precise, rather than introspective and reflective. Similarly, a given interviewee's affective attitude toward the interview may have been affected by physical factors such as background noise, given that a number of interviews were conducted in public meeting places, restaurants or cafes.

It should also be noted, however, that from my perspective, all of the interviewees appeared to be sharing openly and honestly; there was no outward evidence of a desire to hide certain information or to make things appear "better" or different from reality. Interviewees expressed interest in the subject area, and in knowing the conclusions of the research. It seems reasonable to conclude that this interest in the outcome of the project would have motivated interviewees to contribute accurate information to the data gathering process.

How was the population of research subjects defined?

The following defines the population of research subjects ("interviewees"). All interviewees:

1) are American
2) came to Japan intending to earn a living by teaching English to Japanese
3) have been in Japan for a total of between 3 and 20 years

The minimum period of three years was selected because, as a teaching contract would usually be for two years or less, a person staying three years or more would most likely have been faced with a decision to extend his/her stay or to go home, and have chosen to stay. In addition, unlike the initial decision to come to Japan, the decision to stay beyond two years would have been based on experience in the country and some understanding of what could be expected from an extended stay. Note also:

1) Neither prior teaching experience nor a teaching credential were required, though over half of interviewees had one or both.

2) Interviewees who started out teaching English but left teaching for another field while in Japan were also eligible for inclusion.

3) Several interviewees came to Japan knowing that English teaching would be their primary or sole source of income, but with a primary focus on some goal other than teaching (e.g., studying Japanese or writing).

4) Interviewees ranged in age from early 30's to late 60's.

5) Interviewees were employed in a wide variety of settings including the following:

- Private language institute
- Private training and development company
- Language program within a government ministry
- International elementary school ESL
- University
- Government-funded community program
- In-company language program
- Educational publisher

How was the sample population chosen?

The sample of interviewees was a sample of convenience, i.e., persons selected because of their accessibility. This necessarily affected the composition of the group. As I was referred to various interviewees through colleagues and other interviewees, the group is in some respects homogeneous. For example, 14 of the 16 work in the Tokyo area,

which makes them part of a particular sub-culture within Japan, influenced by a particular set of living conditions. Similarly, the range of work environments listed above are not equally represented among the interviewees. As a result, attitudes toward students, Japanese and/or foreign management, and other aspects of the working environment represent neither a tightly controlled nor a widely varied range of situations.

As I explained above. the sample was not scientifically selected, and inferences or conclusions drawn must therefore be considered judgmental, not statistical, and can be applied only to the sample group. I hope and believe, however, that the results of the interviews reveal insights into the motivations and cultural adaptation processes of long-term American residents of Japan from the field of English language teaching.

How was the data collected?

Data was collected through audio-recorded, one-on-one oral interviews. The interviews were conducted using a questionnaire (Appendix A) as a guideline to ensure that the primary areas of interest within the research focus, as listed above, were covered. In cases where limited time was available for the oral interview, a portion of the questionnaire (Appendix B) was completed by the interviewee in advance and brought to the interview.

It is important to note that by no means were all questions listed on the questionnaire covered in every interview. I strove to cover each of the focal areas in the course of a natural, and (according to a number of interviewees) seemingly unguided conversation. Depending on each interviewee's situation, I eliminated certain questions which I felt might be irrelevant, redundant, evident without being asked outright, or even potentially irritating to the interviewee. Wherever possible, I allowed the interviewees to elaborate on and even stray from the main point of the discussion, as this often allowed insight into attitudes and feelings which proved to be of interest. I kept my questions open-ended to as great an

extent as possible, so as not to influence responses and to encourage the interviewees to expand on each topic area.

How was the data analyzed?

As can be seen from the questionnaire form, the interviews led to discussions on a wide variety of topics related to the interviewees' experiences in Japan. Following the interviews, I listened to the recordings and transcribed the bulk of the information onto the actual questionnaire form for ease of reference and analysis. This process allowed me to group the subjects based on their responses, and to examine issues related to the areas which emerged as most significant. I specifically singled out four areas for analysis (see below), based on a personal interest in particular issues as well as a wish to highlight those issues which appeared to be of greatest significance to the interviewees.

As I stated earlier, the sample was not random, and was not large enough to validate quantitative analysis of the results. For this reason, I found it most meaningful, upon completion of the interviews, to isolate particular attitudes and behaviors amongst interviewees and to discuss these in terms of the stated or implied reasons behind them. In some areas, information from the literature on the subject is provided as a frame of reference. The data analysis generally takes the form:

1) Discussion of my view of the issue

2) Presentation and analysis of the interviewees' views of the issue

Though the proposal for the research project stated that 20 subjects would be interviewed, the results presented are based on 16 interviews. The decision to limit the number to 16 was based on analysis of the data from the first 15 interviews. The following

four points emerged from this preliminary analysis as having the most significant impact on the interviewees in their attitudes and behaviors:

1) Reasons for coming to/staying in Japan

2) Reasons for studying/not studying Japanese

3) Feelings about the role of foreigners in Japanese society

4) Reactions to quotes from other foreigners in Japan on their experiences here

Having narrowed the scope of the data analysis to the above four points, it would then have been possible to continue the interviewing process, focusing on these four areas with five more interviewees. However, as this was not a statistical study necessitating a specific sample size, and as 15 interviews had provided a rich source of data for qualitative analysis, I chose to limit the research to an analysis of the perspectives and behaviors already identified. Though five additional interviews could have yielded interesting and worthwhile data, I preferred to explore in greater depth the perspectives of these first 15 interviewees, as well one other with whom an interview had previously been arranged. Analysis of the numbers or percentages of persons who represent various points of view or are influenced by various factors, which would require a much larger sample group, has been left for another type of study.

III. THE INTERVIEWEES

Note: With the exception of Mark, whose published work is cited, the interviewees names have been changed to protect their anonymity.

Name	Number of years in Japan	Length of time originally planned to stay	Left Japan and came back	Japanese language ability	Current employment situation
Abby	4	No specific plan. Maybe 2 to 3 years	Yes	Lower Intermediate	University teacher Free-lance writer
Angela	13	2-year contract	No	Novice	International elementary school ESL teacher
Genna	3	No specific plan. Maybe 10 years	No	Lower Intermediate	In-company language and intercultural trainer
Jay	13	1 year	No	Novice	Trainer at a private training and development company
Jeremy	6	1st stay: 1-2 years This (3rd) stay: No specific plan.	Yes (twice)	Superior	Staff Writer at a language education research center
Jon	5	No specific plan. Maybe a few years	No	Novice	Director of English language training program in a Japanese government ministry
Karen	5	2 years	No	Novice	Manager of in-company language and intercultural training program
Mark	10	1 year	No	Superior	Director, Service Division of a children's English-language book publisher

Name	Number of years in Japan	Length of time originally planned to stay	Left Japan and came back	Japanese language ability	Current employment situation
Mary	18	1 year	No	Advanced	Teacher at a private language institute
Max	4	2 years	No	Novice	Teacher at a private language institute
Melissa	6	1st stay: 2 years This (3rd) stay: 2-3 years	Yes (twice)	Intermediate/ Advanced	Teacher in a city-funded community language program
Mick	7	2 years	Yes	Advanced	University teacher
Paul	14	1st stay: 1 year This stay: not specified	Yes	Intermediate	Teacher/personnel manager at a private language institute. (Soon to become a university teacher)
Stephen	3	No specific plan. Could be forever (his wife is Japanese)	No	Novice	Part-time teacher at a private language institute and a high school
Tara	8	No specific plan.	No	Novice/ Lower Intermediate	Curriculum coordinator and teacher at a private language institute
Warren	4	7 months	No	Intermediate	Trainer at a private training and development company

IV. POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF LIFE IN JAPAN

Positive Aspects

Below is a summary of responses to the question "What are the three strongest positive features of your life in Japan?" Several interviewees stated only two points, whereas others were unable to limit themselves to three. The ranking is as follows:

Ranking	Factor	
#1	Job -	professional challenge respect/status opportunity for growth love of teaching
#2	Money -	absence of financial worries ability to provide for one's old age overall standard of living
#3	Safety -	the low crime rate in Japan
#4	International community	
	Freedom to pursue an autonomous lifestyle*	
	Ability to pursue non-professional interests (e.g.,. writing, sports, music)*	
	Vacations/travel opportunities	
	Japanese traditional culture	
Other **	Efficiency and convenience of Tokyo Family Love of the Japanese language* Lush greenery* Personal/spiritual development* Politeness/honesty/kindness/pragmatism of Japanese people Restaurants Sense of global mission Tokyo as a city of high culture	

* Denotes factors from this list of *positive* features which certain other interviewees felt were lacking in Japan, and thus included in their listing of *negative* features.

** Factors mentioned by one or two interviewees only

This ranking is not analyzed in depth here, as the most significant of the above-listed factors are discussed in greater depth in the analysis in Section V of why people come to and stay in Japan and in the conclusions in Section IX.

Negative Aspects

Below is a summary of responses to the question "What are the three strongest negative features of your life in Japan?" Most interviewees were unable to limit themselves to three features. The ranking is as follows:

Ranking	Factor
#1	Overpopulation of urban areas and resultant crowdedness of public facilities and spaces
#2	Ugliness/lack of greenery in Tokyo
#3	Language barrier In Japanese (most say "this is my own fault") In English (both parties are using English, yet not fully understanding one another) Tendency of the Japanese to conform/group dependency rather than individual, independent thinking
#4	Narrow-mindedness/provinciality of Japanese people
#5	Secrecy/Lack of access to information Difficulties as a non-Japanese in understanding how to use. for example, banks, transportation, and the medical system
Other*	Absence of close friendships Alienation Bad experiences with management (British) Bureaucracy Children at after-hours schools during vacations Commuting Difficult to effect changes Idolization of American things Lack of honesty Lack of spirituality Long working hours/lack of free time Medical care Need to be careful of one's words/behavior Noise pollution Public drunkenness Racism Treatment of women Weather - effect on health

* Factors mentioned by one or two interviewees only

It is interesting to note that, while the negative factors affecting interviewees far outnumber the positive factors, the fact that the respondents are still in Japan seems to indicate that the positive factors carry more weight. Though interviewees felt strongly about the negatives, many pointed out that while they sincerely dislike these elements of life in Japan, they have for the most part grown accustomed to them and developed strategies for coping. One interviewee observed that the unpleasant aspects of life she had identified are not unique to foreigners; a Japanese would very likely identify some of the same points.

Note: In both of the above tables, in cases where several factors were stated by the same number of interviewees, they are listed under the same ranking number. Factors within a particular ranking number are not necessarily related in content, only in the number of times they were mentioned by interviewees.

V. WHY JAPAN?

Given an opportunity to ask anything they want to know about me and my background, my students almost invariably inquire why I chose to come to Japan. Though the question is getting old now, and my answer is well-rehearsed, I never regret an opportunity to reflect on this issue. While my words to students may come out like a playback of a pre-recorded speech, each such "playback" causes me to reassess the veracity of my rehearsed explanation. My in-class answer goes something like the following: "My experience overseas had been limited to France before I went to graduate school. I speak French and am comfortable with French culture. I knew that if I wanted to become a truly qualified professional in the domain of intercultural communication, my base of knowledge and experience would have to be broader. As I had no prior knowledge or experience of the East, I set my sights on Asia. I might have gone to any Asian country, but a challenging job opportunity arose in Japan. So here I am today." (Then, with exaggerated enthusiasm . . .) "It was a good decision." (The students always chuckle here)

The above answer is entirely true – unless to omit information is to lie. It is difficult to say, in retrospect, what all of the motivating factors were, and which played the most influential role in my final decision making. As I recall, the full story went more like the following:

As graduate school was finishing and job-hunting time arrived, I found myself freer than I had anticipated when school began. No longer involved in the relationship that I had thought would keep me from trying out my new teaching degree overseas, I was free to work anywhere in the world. I ruled out France, sincerely wanting to broaden my base of experience. Spain, Eastern Europe and Latin America appealed – and even possibly Asia,

although Asia seemed at the time just a place where people went to make a lot of money. I had never felt inclined before to visit or even study Eastern cultures. Still, trying to be open-minded, and remembering the years of student loan repayment ahead of me, I kept all options open. When an opportunity arose to interview with Japan Airlines, my reaction was "Why not?" I did not expect to get the job, or even to particularly want it. Still, I went to the interview and came away hoping I would be offered the job. Professionally, it was too good to be true. The academic director was well known in the field. The school was new, with resources and freedom to develop in a way that seemed consistent with my philosophy of language education. In addition, these professional "plusses" were available in a country that presented the kind of new cultural experience I was looking for.

Nonetheless, when the offer came I found myself in turmoil over the decision. The professional and cultural advantages were evident. Yet, suddenly I had to decide whether I would like to live and work for two years in Tokyo, capital city of a country about which I knew almost nothing. After living in France where I spoke the language and was able to integrate fairly well, was I prepared to live as a member of the foreign community in a country that had never even appealed to me before? This seemed like a quantum leap.

If I recall correctly, my final decision was based on the following factors. First, I felt ready for an adventure. Having been back in the U.S.A. for four years since my stay in France, wanderlust had hit again. Though the destination was a complete unknown, two close friends were going to the same place; this meant an opportunity to broaden my overseas experience, and at the same time enjoy a built-in support system. I was also in debt. Unable at the time to take care of my own financial needs, much less help my family should a crisis have arisen, a need to be financially responsible weighed heavily on me. A job in Japan could put me on more solid footing in as little as two years. Finally, the Japan Airlines position seemed ideal, in fact almost too good to be true for a teacher with my

limited experience. Thinking back, it seems I made the obvious choice of professional challenge, financial reward, a guarantee of some amount of social/emotional security, and an opportunity to explore a new cultural unknown.

Though I would prefer to consider myself unique, interviews with other teachers revealed that my outlook and the conditions surrounding my decision-making were not a-typical of teachers coming to Japan. Of 16 people interviewed, only 6 had, on their first stay, specifically targeted Japan versus some other country when they decided to move overseas. The remaining 10, far from having a particular desire to come to Japan, in fact knew little of the country or its people and culture before they arrived. Following a discussion of the factors motivating the former group, we shall look at the criteria upon which the latter based their decisions to come to Japan.

Those teachers who specifically designated Japan rather than any other country did so out of an interest in the language and/or the culture. Max specifically targeted Japan, as he had long been fascinated by the "mystery" of Asian culture, and regretted having missed a previous opportunity to study here due to a lack of funds. Years later, he was able to fulfill that dream. When this second opportunity arose, Max said he was influenced not only by his long-standing interest, but also by a friend's recommendation to come and by a need to pay off large student loans.

Two others came primarily to study Japanese language. Jeremy was a long-term student of Japanese and Mick was a student of comparative literature frustrated by his inability to access the work of Japanese writers. Both were employed as English teachers, but were interested first and foremost in furthering their Japanese language skills.

The remaining three teachers in the first group became interested in Japan through contact with Japanese people in the U.S.A. Genna worked in a summer language program and was mystified by Japanese students' attitudes and behaviors. She became determined

to "crack the [cultural] code" that had caused tremendous frustration in her teaching. Paul, too, had worked with Japanese students and became interested in their country and culture. Stephen said that he became interested in Japan while in the U.S.A. and felt this interest would eventually have lead him here. In his case, however, he married a Japanese woman and came when he did largely at her impetus.

It is not difficult to grasp the clearly stated motivations of these first six interviewees. The remaining ten, however, based their decisions on much less concrete factors. Most fell into one of two categories. The first group wanted above all to live abroad, and were open to nearly any country where a feasible living situation could be found. The others focused primarily on finding work, and were willing to travel in order to find the right job. Most significant is the fact that Japan as a country and culture seemed to play a small role at best in the decision-making process. These teachers chose Japan because it was outside the U.S.A., because jobs could be found, and because the risks involved seemed minimal, not because of anything inherently appealing about Japan.

The attitude of these ten people is perhaps the key characteristic that differentiates members of the international community from other personality types. They perceive the world as smaller and its far reaches more accessible than do others. In the same way that another person might be willing to move to a new city or state, to pursue a job or simply for a change of pace, members of the international community tend to feel comfortable moving from one country to another for the same reasons. As Jon very frankly replied when queried about his move to Japan, "It was a foreign country, and there was a job there." Other interviewees, even those for whom Japan was the first long-term overseas living experience, responded with similar nonchalance, as if the move to Japan were as commonplace as a move from one town to the next.

Though most did not directly say so, there seems also to have been a perceived element of security in coming to Japan. No interviewee seemed to feel he/she had taken a risk in choosing to live here. Though perhaps lacking knowledge of Japanese lifestyle or culture, the teachers had heard that jobs were easy to find in Japan. Though many claimed with sincerity to have been unaware of the inflated salaries often paid to English teachers, there was nonetheless a feeling that it would be possible to support oneself, either because a job had been secured while still in the U.S.A. or because a former teacher in Japan had offered this reassurance. Karen, who had been a part of the international English teaching community for years before coming here, stated matter-of-factly that "all ESL professionals eventually end up in Japan. Japan was hot." Mark followed the recommendation of his former boss, who told him "Japan is the future." In addition, Japan of course presented none of the obvious discomforts or dangers of third-world countries, or nations torn by war. As an industrialized and highly civilized culture, Japan was sure to afford some of the basic creature comforts to which the teachers were accustomed at home.

Up to this point, I have looked only at teachers' initial motivations for coming to Japan. Yet 5 of the 16 had returned to the U.S.A. and later come to live in Japan again, on at least one occasion. Needless to say, those who are on their second or third stays were affected by past experience and, thus, differently motivated the second and third times they made the choice to live here. Reasons for returning ranged from the practical "I was offered a good job and knew from past experience that Japan was easy and comfortable for me," to the familial "we wanted to be near my [Japanese] wife's family," to the emotional "I missed my friends" or "I feel more comfortable here than I do in the U.S.," or some combination of the above. Amongst returnees, Paul is unique in that he had married into a Japanese family and also had a child's future to consider. In the case of the other returnees, it is interesting to note that while the above reasons were based on past

experience, they are not dissimilar to at least two of the initially stated factors, professional opportunity and security.

The above analysis provides insight into the personalities and priorities of people who have chosen Japan as a home. More telling, still, are their answers to the question "Why are you still here, after three or more years?" I presumed at the start of my research that, in spite of the negative attitude toward Japan that I often perceived in American teachers, anyone who had lived here for over three years had found a way of life that was sufficiently rewarding on at least certain levels to keep them in this country. For months I explained to anyone who asked that answering the question "Why do teachers stay?" was the primary goal of my research. I refused to be dissuaded by the typical reaction from friends and colleagues, which was "Why waste your time asking? Everybody knows it's the money."

No interviewee could deny that high salaries (for the field of language teaching) in Japan were an important incentive for staying. On the other hand, a sincere enjoyment of their work and a sense of professional challenge and reward also emerged as key motivators. Professional incentives came across, in fact, as being at least as important, if not more important, than financial reward.

Feelings about work ranged from simply content ("I enjoy my teaching – why change?") to a sense of mission ("I don't know if I knew at first how passionate it would become for me.") Several felt that Japan offered unique opportunities. "Where else could you move from teacher to manager in four years?" asked Karen, "Why run away from that?" Paul was promoted from teacher to personnel manager of a large company within three months of his arrival.

Clearly, then, salary alone has not kept these people in Japan. Some, in fact, said that if the job were less rewarding, the salary would long ago have ceased to be sufficient

motivation to remain. The two seem to go hand in hand. Without the professional challenge and reward, the salary alone would not be enough. Likewise, without the salary, people might not stay purely for career pursuits.

The importance of professional factors and especially the opportunities available to professional teachers may surprise some readers, given the image of English teaching here – especially amongst non-teacher expatriates. It is possible to come to Japan with no teaching qualifications and earn a considerable salary as a teacher at an English conversation school. Students at such schools often pay high tuition fees to study English as a hobby. Paul quoted a guest at a party who said he disliked English teachers because he felt they were here "ripping people off and creating a bad image." Unfortunately, despite the existence of numerous professional-quality language programs, the negative image of the less professional organizations is too often generalized in this way to the entire EFL field. While Paul agreed that this phenomenon exists in Japan, he was frustrated at being stereotyped as this type of teacher. He claimed that at one point, this negative image nearly drove him to abandon the field entirely. In the end, however, Paul and other teachers who have remained in Japan, and for whom professional excellence is a high priority, presumably have succeeded in focusing on the merits of their particular working environments rather than being dragged down by negative stereotypes.

It is interesting when studying the working environment to note the extent to which Japanese culture was reflected in people's views. Though the majority cited the importance of professional reward, Genna alone expressed a particular passion for doing her work in Japan, with Japanese students, rather than with members of another culture. For her, teaching here is part of a greater mission to improve relations between Japan and the U.S.A. Genna believes her commitment to this mission will keep her here for at least ten years. The other teachers, conversely, seemed concerned purely with conditions within the

EFL field. They said they had stayed in Japan for professional reasons; I believe that most of these teachers would be equally, if not more, content to work in any number of other countries where the same professional environment could be found.

In fact, the majority of interviewees seemed at best to be complacent about their lives here. Career satisfaction seemed to keep them here in spite of lukewarm feelings about other aspects of their lifestyles. Quotes like the following were common: "It's getting easier, but I can't say I really like living here, still." "Why stay, but why go?" Only six actually stated in so many words that they were happy living in Japan. Several who stressed the importance of their work said they were still in Japan in part because they doubted that the same career opportunities existed elsewhere. Given the choice, they would prefer to do the same jobs in places better suited to their non-professional needs and tastes.

In addition to professional reward, pragmatics were important to a number of teachers, for some as a primary and others as a contributing factor in keeping them in Japan. The need for such practical guarantees as job security, tenure, and pensions have kept some teachers in the same jobs for years. Particularly given the current economic environment in Japan and the rest of the world, a certain cautiousness seemed to prevail.

Having looked at what keeps people here, let us look at the other side of the coin. Given the above advantages to staying in Japan, what could make these teachers leave? Five of the 16, here for 4 to 14 years, said they had decided to leave within a year or two. Karen felt that "things were starting to happen in America" and that she was ready to "be an American again." On the other hand, she said she had been planning to leave "in two years" since she first arrived her five years ago, and realized that certain factors could again keep her from acting on her word. Paul would eventually like to raise his son in America, though he seemed willing for the time being to accommodate his wife's preference to keep

the family in Japan. Though familial and spiritual concerns are clearly important to him, and would ideally lead him back to the U.S.A., Paul said he could be persuaded to lean toward whichever country afforded him the most interesting professional opportunity. In fact, all who currently plan to leave in the next year or two said they could be persuaded to stay if the right job presented itself.

This was true even of Jeremy, who had said that his decision to leave was based on having reached the limit of his tolerance for the racism, lack of freedom of expression, human rights violations, and overall complacency he sees in Japan. Though work is important to him, "it comes to the point where, that's all good and fine, but I can't live my life based solely on the professional side of things. If the professional life is there, but other things aren't, that's not a good reason for staying." Yet, he later stated that if a new opportunity arose to do the kind of work that is important to him, and he could continue to save money and live fairly comfortably, he might consider staying on.

For Jeremy, and no doubt for others as well, other factors of life, positive and negative, must be in balance in order for people to choose to stay. Even Jeremy, who seemed to have reached a breaking point with non-work-related aspects of his life seemed later to say that these things could conceivably come back into balance to an extent that he would feel comfortable remaining in Japan. This, I believe, is an important point, as it is too easy in this type of analysis to state absolutes, when in fact, the factors influencing interviewees are in constant flux, such that the balance may tip at any given time, affecting peoples' feelings about staying or going.

Melissa's story illustrates this well. She stated at one point, " It's just easier to stay where you are, no matter where it is, than to pick up and go into an unknown situation. I was already at the point [after one year in Japan] where, going home I felt like an outsider." She later went on to explain that on this third stay in Japan, she had decided to return to the

U.S.A. at the end of her two-year contract – until she met her current boyfriend. Japan was comfortable, and she was very pleased with her job, but deep dissatisfaction with her social life had become more than she was willing to live with. After meeting her boyfriend, she changed her mind about leaving and signed a new one-year contract. Melissa said that if she separated from her boyfriend and her social life returned to a level she felt was unacceptable, she would probably leave the country. Like Jeremy, she had decided that the job alone was not enough. However, when asked if she would leave even if offered her director's position at the school, she allowed that, even were her boyfriend not a part of her life, this might persuade her to stay.

Mark was unique among interviewees in his attitude toward staying or leaving; he seemed to be free from the burden of making a decision one way or the other. Not only did he say he was happy and felt comfortable in Japan, he claimed simply not to consider the possibility of leaving. This does not mean, he said, that he never will leave. He simply does not think about it at present. Where others seemed to have made conscious decisions about staying based on careful analysis of concrete factors, Mark did not see his presence in Japan as needing to be questioned or periodically reevaluated. He loves his job, his friends, the Japanese language, and the interests he is able to pursue outside of work. Leaving is not an issue.

Stories like Melissa's are far more common. It would be possible to find such conflicting motivations in the stories of most interviewees. Though I have focussed here on their motivations to come and reasons for staying, I have not discussed the phases of indecision or the changes of plans. Most interviewees said that the decision of whether to stay or go was made on a yearly basis. In Max's case, he claimed to plan only 10 weeks ahead, committing to only one such teaching term at a time. Many interviewees described patterns of deciding numerous times to go home, then being influenced by a new job

prospect, a raise, a general feeling of contentment or at least complacency, or simply inertia, to stay for another year . . . and another, and another. Even those who had been in Japan as long as 13 years said that they extended their stays only one year at a time. Those interviewed had not yet faced this decision at a time when the negative side of the scale outweighed the positive. Certainly, it would be interesting to compare the results of this research with information provided by teachers who have returned to the U.S.A. Understanding why teachers stay could be only more interesting knowing why others have chosen to go.

VI. SPEAKING JAPANESE

I was mystified when I first arrived in Japan by the number of foreigners who seemed to get by with little or no knowledge of the Japanese language. Though I, too, had come to Tokyo not having learned Japanese, I felt it would be essential to my adaptation process to start studying as quickly as possible. My motivations were threefold.

Perhaps my greatest motivation came from an intrinsic love of languages; I had long been fascinated with the written and spoken word. When I came to Japan, I had not studied a new language in several years, and was eager to begin. Cracking the language code had in the past been like a game for me, when I studied French and Italian. In this case, the game would have the added advantage of opening doors into the new culture where I would be living.

My second motivation might be better described as a sense of obligation. Lacking language skills and knowledge of Japanese culture, I knew it would be impossible for me to integrate smoothly into Japanese society. Still, I felt a responsibility as a guest in their country, and as a sort of ambassador for my own, to demonstrate interest in and respect for the people through a willingness to learn their language, rather than expecting them to use mine. It seemed presumptuous to me that I should expect to be able to function in Japan using only English. While I knew it would take a long while to reach any significant level of communicative ability in Japanese, I felt it was important, both as a gesture of cultural sensitivity and for my own cultural adjustment, to at least take steps in that direction.

Finally, in more pragmatic terms, it was simply annoying and inconvenient not to have access to a large part of my human and physical surroundings. I quickly became irritated at my inability to read signs, train schedules, and even my own pay stub. It was

time-consuming to ask colleagues to translate my mail and make phone calls on my behalf. And, of course, I was unable to understand conversations going on around me at work and out in public, and was incapable of conversing with anyone who did not speak English. I was frustrated and embarrassed to walk out of shops having purchased nothing, simply because I had not been able to explain with words or even with gestures what I was looking for.

How then, did some people tolerate living this way for years? Did it not bother them as much as it did me to be cut off in so many ways from their surroundings? How were they functioning from day to day, taking care of the most basic needs for survival, without language skills?

I have since come to understand that there are two distinct questions involved in this issue. The first question, asked above, is "How"? How do people manage? The second question, more difficult for me to understand, is "Why"? Learning or not learning Japanese was, in my mind, a matter of conscious choice. Given what I felt were significant disadvantages to not speaking the language, why would anyone choose not to learn?

After nearly two years in Japan, I find the "how" is no longer difficult to explain. Amazing though it may seem to the uninitiated, it is possible to function quite smoothly, at least in Tokyo, using little or no Japanese. This is perhaps especially true for English teachers. A large percentage of a teacher's time is generally spent at work, where, even outside class hours, it is common to work with a number of other foreigners and/or English-speaking colleagues. Outside working hours, one can establish a social circle of non-Japanese and/or Japanese able to communicate in English. Such contacts can fulfill both a need to relate to other members one's own culture and a desire to connect with Japanese people and gain knowledge and insight into Japanese culture.

On the other hand, there are moments in any given day where one must communicate directly with Japanese who may not speak English – for example, in shops, at train stations, or in taxis. In such situations, it is possible with a few simple words in Japanese, a bit of body language and perhaps a clearly enunciated word or two in English to complete most simple purchases and transactions. As all Japanese have had nearly 10 years of English study in school, most are able to participate in negotiation of meaning. Even those who cannot do this using English are certainly able to deduce that "*Shinjuku?*" uttered with rising intonation and a shrug of the shoulders means "How do I get to Shinjuku from here?", and can point you in the right direction. Of course, even in these daily interactions, it is not uncommon to encounter a Japanese who is able to communicate more effectively in English than the non-Japanese customer can do in Japanese.

Finally, in addition to human resources, non-Japanese have access to a wide variety of English-language information and services: newspapers, television news, bookstores, telephone information lines, travel information offices, hospitals and a wide variety of other resources. Though this list is in no way exhaustive, it is nonetheless a clear indication that, in spite of the language barrier, non-Japanese English speakers are far from isolated, especially in Tokyo where these human and other resources are available in abundance.

If the above explains to some extent <u>how</u> one might function without Japanese, we are left to discover why. I will turn now to my interviewees for answers. Only a portion of them, though, fall into this category of language learners. Up to now, I have focused on <u>not</u> studying Japanese, as it is those non-Japanese who do not speak the language who initially sparked my curiosity. My interviews, however, turned up language learners at various stages on the proficiency scale, from true novices to fluent speakers. Analysis, therefore, provides insight into motivations at both ends of the spectrum.

Nearly half of the the interviewees fell into the novice or novice + categories. Approximately one-third rated themselves somewhere between upper and lower intermediate; the remaining one-fourth of the group ranked in the advanced to superior category. As always, more interesting than the figures themselves were the reasons people gave for their levels of proficiency at that time.

Why did the advanced and fluent speakers achieve such high levels? First, all four have an intrinsic interest in the study of languages. Three of them devoted themselves to learning Japanese before coming to Japan, and hence before needing the language for communication purposes. Their interest lie in the language itself, which they perceived as useful or interesting for a variety of reasons other than communication.

Mary, a PhD candidate in linguistics, was required by her university to study one non-Indo-European language; she chose Japanese. When a job opportunity arose and she came to Japan, she continued her study. Viewing language learning as a never-ending process, she continues to study privately after 18 years in Japan, both to improve her ability to communicate and out of a continuing intrinsic interest in Japanese as a language.

Another high-level speaker, Mick, was also first inspired by academic motivations. While studying a particular French author, he became interested in the Japanese writers who had influenced this Frenchman, and eventually began to study Japanese. Feeling limited by his classroom language learning experiences, Mick came to Japan hoping to learn Japanese as a "living language". While at the time of the interview, he was no longer actively pursuing his studies in comparative literature, Mick now reads Japanese literature in the original, in addition to using Japanese in both social and professional settings.

Jeremy is one of the two most proficient in Japanese of all those interviewed. He began studying the language in college – something he had wanted to do since junior high. He has come back to Japan twice since his first stay as a college exchange student; he has

lived in Japan for a total of six years and socialized a great deal in Japanese. Interestingly, this proficient speaker dwelt more than any other interviewee on the frustrations of not being able to express himself exactly as he would like to – not because of limited proficiency on his part, but because of the nature of the Japanese language.

> I would get frustrated because I couldn't express directly enough what I wanted to say. I felt really empty, like I was getting pulled by the words. I wasn't allowed to say what I really wanted to say. I was following the formulas. You're different when you speak Japanese. You change. You push the feelings down – *kimochi osaeru*... You do that all the time.

This feeling, he claimed, was shared by a friend, fluent in Japanese, who used the language in television and radio work in Tokyo. This friend apparently did not realize how limited she felt by the Japanese language until she spent time at home, communicating in English, and "felt like these scales were just falling off my body". Back in English, she was freed of the constraints of the patterns and formulas required for communication in Japanese.

Mark, the final member of the group of high-level speakers, did not seem to share this view. Like Jeremy, Mark is fluent in Japanese. Mark, however, did not study the language before coming to Japan. He spent his first three years here in a rural area where few people speak any English. He blamed his lack of communicative ability for his profound dislike of Japan during his first eight months in the country. Terribly frustrated by his inability to communicate, Mark made up his mind early on to master Japanese. He had no long term goal in mind; he simply knew that he wanted to be able to talk to people "now!" He set a goal of sitting and chatting in Japanese in the same coffee shop where he had enviously watched Japanese people enjoying each others' company.

Unlike the three interviewees mentioned above, Mark's first motivation for learning Japanese was need-based; he felt desperate to communicate with the people around him. After an unhappy beginning to his stay here, Mark said that once he was able to use the

language, he discovered he really liked Japan. Ten years later, he said he spends the majority of his non-working time socializing in Japanese with his Japanese friends.

Other interviewees mentioned difficulties in communicating with Japanese friends. Certain barriers to communicating "American-style" are inherent in the Japanese language. In addition to this linguistic factor, interviewees indicated that, proficiency level aside, it can be difficult to communicate with Japanese friends at a level of emotional or intellectual depth that meets their needs. In Genna's words:

> When I go to Japanese parties, it's not the language barrier that causes a problem. It's the way that they interact that is so unfulfilling for me. It's so unsatisfying to me to interact on what feels like such a superficial level. Maybe for them it feels deep and profound – they're just keeping things on the surface so that they all get along. I'd rather risk a little conflict and talk about some interesting ideas. I'm often frustrated by this. Other times I'm happy to go out drinking and have a good time with people from the company. It's satisfying on a certain level, and I can do it and enjoy it. But when you need something more substantial, it's frustrating not to be able to get it.

These feelings were echoed by others, who explained that while they do have Japanese friends, it is fellow foreigners they turn to when they want to set aside the rules of social and conversational etiquette and spend time truly relaxing with others. Even with the closest of their Japanese friends, most said that for sociolinguistic reasons more than because of a language barrier, they are not able to truly be themselves.

If this is the feeling of foreigners proficient in Japanese, to what extent are those without language skills truly missing out? Nearly everyone in this group expressed embarrassment at not having learned more or made more of an effort with the language. All said they wished they could speak better than they do. They recognize that a lack of language ability inevitably limits their ability to connect with certain people and certain elements of the culture. Yet this sense of limitation has not weighed heavily enough to push them to significantly increase their proficiency. Why do they remain novices? The interviewer heard seven versions of similar stories.

Perhaps the most clear-cut reason expressed by some for not studying Japanese is that the language simply holds no intrinsic appeal for them. It is not possible within the scope of this study to discover for certain why this is true. Lack of familiarity is one possible explanation, given the tendency until recently in American schools to focus on the teaching of European languages. Perhaps, too, the complexity of written Japanese, comprised largely of Chinese ideographic characters, is off-putting. Whereas Romance languages may be associated with cultures of which many people have an idealized, romanticized image, for those less well-informed about Asia, Japanese may lack the same strong association with a positively regarded culture. As mentioned above in the discussion of motivations for coming to Japan, the majority of interviewees had little or no prior interest in the country before coming. It is not so surprising, then, that the language should hold no sort of magical appeal in and of itself.

Lack of perceived need to use Japanese is yet a stronger deterrent. Of the 16 interviewed, 11 people originally planned to stay in Japan for anywhere from six months to two years. Given such limited time frames, it is not surprising that some might choose not to undertake a language as difficult as Japanese. Yet now, the novices have been in Japan from 3 to 13 years, and the increased length of their stays appears not to have led them to take further steps toward learning. This can be attributed in part to two factors. One of these is mentioned above – the fact that within the first year or so in Japan, one realizes that it is quite possible to function without learning the language. In addition, several interviewees seemed to feel that, had they known they would be staying longer, they might have studied, but "I've gotten by this far, so why bother now?" Though the total years may be adding up, many still see the future one year at a time, and feel it is not worthwhile to study if "it's only for one more year." Several of the novice group have operated on this year-to-year basis for ten years or more. Max claimed not to plan further ahead than one

ten-week class term. It is, then, a feeling of transiency or impermanence that keeps some on the English side of the language barrier.

For others, there simply is not and has never been any desire or intention to learn. No guilt; no "if I'd known I'd be here this long . . ."; no intentions. It just did not and does not seem to them a necessary skill for living and working in Japan.

Japanese language teaching methods were occasionally attacked, though most admitted that this was more of an excuse than a reason for not studying. Max actually went so far as to say, "I'm not in the business of wasting my money." Though the methodologies may not be those that many American learners feel most comfortable with, those determined to learn the language have managed to get past this obstacle.

Time constraints appeared more frequently than dissatisfaction with methodology as an obstacle to interviewees' pursuit of formal language study. Although many expressed a desire to speak better Japanese, and even embarrassment at their lack of progress, neither of these factors has been strong enough to make them sacrifice other time-consuming pursuits in order to attend classes. As Jon put it, "There has always been something else that I wanted to do more."

The final reason to be addressed here for not studying language reflects unique aspects of Japanese culture. Though each said it in different words, many interviewees stated that regardless of whether they feel personally motivated to study Japanese, there are in fact rather strong disincentives in Japan to learning the language. As will be discussed further on, in Section VII, the foreigner's place in Japanese society is distinctly apart from the rest of the culture. Foreigners are expected to remain outside the concentric circles of Japanese relationships. Though some would argue this, many would agree that it is virtually impossible for a foreigner to become an "insider" in Japan. To quote Genna, "They seem to pride themselves on the idea that no one can learn their language – it's the

'we are an island people' thing." Every English teacher in Japan hears this theory sooner or later – that Japan is an island nation, that the Japanese are therefore unique on earth, and basically, that it is impossible for outsiders to comprehend, much less penetrate, the mysteries of their culture. So long as a foreigner remains outside all elements of Japanese culture, it is perhaps easy for the Japanese to conceive of who that person is. What happens, then, when a foreigner speaks Japanese? Is he/she still on the outside of the concentric circles? Has he/she broken a part of the mystical code that makes the Japanese uniquely Japanese? A foreigner who speaks Japanese is more difficult to categorize, and thereby, in the opinion of some, suspect in the eyes of the Japanese. In Genna's words, "They have enormous patience in dealing with you from the outside, but it's more unsettling if you're partly on the inside. And it depends on what personality you put through with your Japanese. You can be in trouble, for example, if you sound fluent but don't know how to use *keigo* (honorific forms) properly."

So it may be disadvantageous, not only from the Japanese perspective, but also from our own perspective, for foreigners to learn Japanese. There is the danger that one who speaks the language will automatically be expected to understand other elements of the culture, and therefore to behave more in the manner of a Japanese. The implications of this could be very far reaching. In a professional setting, this could mean adhering more closely to the Japanese standard of loyalty to job and company. In addition, as mentioned above, there is the danger of committing a serious faux pas if one's mastery of honorifics and business conduct proves imperfect.

On a less dramatic level, Tara pointed out another advantage of speaking limited, rather than fluent, Japanese. She is able to chit chat with her Japanese neighbors about the weather, their respective families, and so on. This enables her to feel a part of her neighborhood, which is, for Tara, "the way things should be." Yet she is not expected to

go beyond this somewhat superficial level of interaction. In contrast to views presented earlier of interviewees frustrated by barriers to communication on a deeper, more meaningful level, Tara points out the advantage of limited language skills in cases where a deeper level of communication is not desired. In this case, Tara's language ability allows to her to get inside the culture to a small extent, but without requiring a commitment to the development of close relationships.

Thus, while language skills may open certain doors in terms of communication, the lack of those skills provides protective barriers that some foreigners hesitate to take down. In a culture dictated by strict hierarchy, rigid gender roles and numerous other constraints on behavior and lifestyle, it is not undesirable in the eyes of many non-Japanese to remain outside the system, in the relative comfort of an outsiders' zone where the "rules" do not apply.

In sum, then, teachers' reasons for studying or not studying Japanese became infinitely clearer to me as I tried to view the situation through the eyes of each interviewee. Certainly, I am still more easily able to relate to those committed to learning Japanese. Though I have not reached their levels, I relate to their attitude and various motivations to learn. On the other hand, I am now sympathetic to the situation of those not cultivating their language skills. As a relatively inexperienced outside observer of the long-term scenario, I initially found it difficult to grasp the logic behind their actions. Looking, though, at such very real factors as time-constraints, uncertain plans regarding one's stay in Japan, lack of interest in the culture, or cultural disincentives to speaking Japanese, it is clear enough why the considerable investment of time, effort and money might not be justified in the eyes of many.

VII. THE ROLE OF THE *GAIJIN*

Gaijin was the first word I learned in Japanese, with the exception of *ah soooo*, which I suppose I first heard on television as a child. I no longer remember how I came to learn *gaijin*. I only know that I became aware, shortly after accepting a job in Tokyo, that as a foreigner in Japan, this word would be used to refer to me. The term must be significant, I thought, if one as uninitiated as myself in Japanese culture managed to learn it so early in my Japan education. I assumed from the start that the word carried negative connotations. The fact that it was so quickly brought to my attention seemed to indicate an emphasis on classification of people -- a need to assign a special title to non-Japanese. When I learned the literal translation of the word ("outside person"), the way in which the language separates foreigners from Japanese became clearer yet. As I was considering at that time possible topics for the Independent Professional Project, I immediately seized on the idea of studying the significance of the term *gaijin* for the Japanese and the ramifications of being a *gaijin* in Japan.

I have now lived here for nearly two years. I have heard *gaijin* uttered countless times by Japanese and non-Japanese alike, and continue to find significance in the term itself. Studies of its origins, and of its various possible meanings when uttered or heard by Japanese, provide fascinating insights into Japanese culture, and into the role Japanese expect foreigners to play within their society. However, an honest look at my own feelings about this term, and the views of the interviewees, have shown that from our perspective, the word itself does not have the profound significance I initially expected. Perhaps we consider it more similar to the English word "foreigner" than to more derogatory English terms used to denote specific groups of non-Anglo-Saxons, such as "wop" or "chink."

I have analyzed below my own reaction and the reactions of interviewees to the word *gaijin*, as this was my initial focus, and as the question provoked responses worth reporting. The next step of the analysis, however, moves to the deeper level of meaning suggested above – the importance in Japan of the role of an "outside person" which this term implies. It is the focus on group membership and the outsider role assigned to non-Japanese that stood out in the interviews as the most significant aspect for interviewees of living as *gaijin* in Japan.

Let us look first, then, at the word *gaijin* itself. Despite my initial concerns, I myself now find the word only minimally offensive. As group membership is crucial to functioning in Japanese society, I consider it significant and unfortunate that the Japanese should have chosen to label foreigners with a term that emphasizes alienating them from the in-group. Still, I recognize that there has to be some term to refer to non-Japanese, and that *gaijin* must often be used in this neutral sense (much as I use the word "foreigner"). It is only when I hear the word uttered aloud with amazement or amusement as a one-word sentence, or accompanied by whispers and giggles, that I wish I were able to deliver a brief lecture in Japanese on sensitivity and appropriate behavior toward fellow human beings and the evils of racism.

It is worthwhile to note that, while the most commonly used word for a foreigner is *gaijin*, this term derives from the longer and more polite *gaikokujin* – literally "outside country person." How significant is it that the latter term emphasizes the "outsideness" of the foreigner's country, whereas the former applies the"outside" distinction to the foreigner himself?

Interviewees, when asked how they felt about the word *gaijin*, in nearly every case responded immediately with something along the lines of "It doesn't bother me at all" or "I don't care about it." Two made reference to *gaikokujin*, saying they would prefer that

people use this more polite term. Still, all seemed to agree that when it came down to it, a word was nothing more than a word.

On the other hand, further discussion led most people to relate at least one incidence of being called *gaijin* by Japanese in a way they found offensive. Their reactions, they said, depended upon their mood when they heard the term, who used it, in what setting, and with what tone of voice. Coming from children, for example, the term could be less offensive. Not surprising, said some, that a child should be taken aback by the appearance of one so physically different from him or herself. The reaction of the accompanying parent, though, sometimes caused tempers to flare. Some interviewees have been shocked to see young mothers giggling like schoolgirls as they scurry the "offending" children away. Others have been pleased to see a parent reprimanding a child and apologizing to the offended party for the child's behavior. Two interviewees suggested that the latter behavior seems to be on the increase. However, Warren expressed concern that for so many children to know and use the word *gaijin*, someone must be teaching it. He was disappointed to think that parents find it necessary to teach their children this practice of labelling people. One can argue that much of what children learn is by example rather than directly taught by their parents. This nonetheless suggests an unfortunate number of negative examples in childrens' environments.

Jay explained that he, too, has long been interested in the connotations of the term *gaijin* Like myself and others, his reaction to it depends upon how it is used. Jay compared the word *gaijin* to the word "lady".

> We can say 'she's a lady through and through' or 'she's a wonderful lady' or 'the nicest lady I've ever met.' But we can also say, 'Lady, what are you cutting in front of me for?' or 'Lady, get out of the way.' I think they can use the word *gaijin* the same way. Of course, they're not going to tell you that. We've asked them and they all say it has no bad connotations. I tend to think it can have, though it certainly doesn't have to.
>
> I've asked Japanese 'If it's not rude to stare at a *gaijin*, if *gaijin* is not a bad term, why is it that when I'm visiting companies, no one ever uses it? How about this –

> maybe everybody at the company thinks I'm there on business and they're being polite with me.' You can't argue with Japanese, but at least I made them think.

Mark had recently written an essay entitled "The Gaijin and the Japanese Language," in which he discussed the use of the term *gaijin*.

> Other East Asians are not quite as much outsiders as Caucasians. In fact the term *gaijin* is not usually used for them. They are usually addressed by their nationality--Korean, Chinese, Taiwanese. I find it interesting that most blacks are called *kokujin* (black person) instead of *gaijin*. Yet if the black person excels in a certain area, for example, baseball – then he is referred to as *gaijin senshu* (foreign player) (Segerlund 1990, 9).

Mark added, however, that the Japanese people with whom he has discussed this issue do not all agree on the use of the term; some refer to other East Asians as *gaijin*, while others reserve the term for Caucasian foreigners.

Perhaps we *gaijin* can never be sure what connotations this nomenclature carries for a Japanese. On the other hand, it is not difficult to find evidence in the culture of the attitude toward "outside people" that the word might imply. The insider mentality that plays a key role in the structuring of Japanese society is explained by social anthropologist Chie Nakane. In both professional and social settings, she says, the identity of the individual is derived from membership in a particular group. From the group comes a sense of security and belonging. Within each group, relationships are based on a hierarchical system; a new member must enter at the bottom of this hierarchy.

> Entry at any other point would disrupt the order and the links between existing members. In this system, it is more advantageous for a man to remain in the same group than to move from one group to another. To stay in the same group is to climb the ladder in the course of time, since the group recruits new members who are placed beneath him, while older members above him fall out either through retirement or death; thus, in due time, he can accumulate a kind of social capital by remaining in the same group. This social capital, of course, cannot be transferred with him if he moves to another group (Nakane 1991, 108-109).

While this description pertains specifically to a working environment, the concept is reflected in other groups as well. Given this rigid social structure, it is not difficult to see

how it might be difficult for a non-Japanese with no prior group association to break into the system, or for Japanese to form new groups in order to include non-Japanese members.

> The Japanese have failed to develop any social manner properly applicable to strangers, to people from 'outside'. In the store of Japanese etiquette there are only two basic patterns available: one which applies to a 'superior' and another which applies to an 'inferior'; or, to put it another way, there are expressions of familiarity and expressions of hostility, but none which apply on the peer level or which indicate indifference. This produces discomfort during contact with a stranger, whether he be foreigner or Japanese (Nakane 1991, 135).

This certainly suggests that Japanese do, indeed, view non-Japanese as necessarily outside the system and difficult, at best, to incorporate into the group. Note, however, that this does not appear to be a matter of choice. If Nakane's analysis is accurate, it seems to say that failure by the Japanese to incorporate non-Japanese into their social fabric does not reflect malice or a willful desire to exclude. Rather, she is suggesting that the Japanese have simply never learned how to incorporate anyone who does not already have a clearly defined place in the system. There are 'rules' dictating behavior toward one's superiors and inferiors, but none telling how to deal with an unknown. Perhaps until some rules evolve or are established, non-Japanese will continue to exist in their separate, untouchable realm.

The interviews revealed people to be far more disturbed by this attitude toward and the resulting treatment of non-Japanese than by the term *gaijin* itself. Several said that while they are not overly bothered by Japanese who stare, or who exclaim "*gaijin*" upon seeing a foreigner, they feel these behaviors reflect a deeper cultural ill; they describe Japanese people as extremely provincial. Anthropologists have also commented on the provincialism of Japanese people. Nakane uses the term "localism" in discussing this concept.

> The social organization which causes an individual to be engrossed so deeply in personal relations at the same time limits the scope of his personal relations. He is well informed about his own group and institution, and to a somewhat lesser extent

> about those in competition. But his activities and concerns rarely extend beyond this world (Nakane 1991, 135)
>
> The *localism* . . . functions externally to preclude personal relationships with the 'outsider' (Nakane 1991, 140).

Interestingly, Mark found that a tendency toward provincialism and an inability to accept non-Japanese increased with education. He claimed that Japanese with a university education tend to have a significantly more narrow world view than those less educated. He suggested that Japanese people who have not attended college have not been as deeply inculcated with the myth of Japanese homogeneity and the rigidly proscribed rules for social organization, and are therefore more willing and able to accept him as an individual.

Jeremy carried the localism accusation one step further. He agreed with the view of the Japanese as a provincial people. He, however, was more deeply disturbed, and no longer willing to tolerate*, the extreme racism he perceived in Japan. He described racism as a tremendous societal ill and was clearly angry at the ways it was directed against him personally.

> Japan is racist and America is racist, but in America there's a dialogue going on about it. I don't condemn people, but I make it clear that I don't like that [kind of racist behavior].
>
> Racism is when you go to rent an apartment in Tokyo and they tell you "*Gaijin dame*" (no foreigners allowed). Not even asking me if I speak Japanese, if I've lived here before. . . . I'm sorry, but that is just wrong. I've not suffered nearly as much as a lot of minority groups have in the States, but it starts you to think about some things. You become a lot more empathetic about it. Because that's a really awful feeling. It's uncomfortable, it's embarrassing, you feel angry, you can't do anything about it. Because that person's not breaking the law in Japan. They can say whatever they want.

Others, too, stated that Japan is a profoundly racist society. The difference was that they seemed not to be bothered by it to the same extent as Jeremy. "I never thought I would say it, but I'm a little bit laid back on racism," said Jay. "We're outsiders, and how

*Jeremy has decided to go back to the U.S.A., probably within a year.

can we be anything else?" Stephen felt racism in Japan, though undeniable, was less.strongly expressed in Japan than in the U.S.A. "I am conscious every day of my differentness," he said, "but I have never been hated for it."

Mary pointed out another perspective on racism. What may be perceived as racist behavior could, in some cases, simply be strategies by the Japanese to avoid embarrassment. A taxi driver who refuses to pick up a non-Japanese may be acting out of fear that he would not be able to communicate with a foreign passenger. Hairdressers who refuse to serve foreigners may feel ill-equipped or ill-trained to manage non-Japanese' hair and give adequate service.

Many interviewees pointed out such incidents of outsider treatment as being refused by taxi drivers or hairdressers, or having difficulty renting an apartment due to "no foreigner" policies. All expressed negative feelings about such treatment, and a general disapproval of the insider mentality they felt this reflected in Japanese society. Yet, of 16 interviewees, only two pointed out specific examples of groups in which they felt strongly about not being 100% accepted as members.

Karen, who has been with the same company for 5 years and is now a manager, continues to be viewed as a *shokutaku*, or temporary employee. As such, she is considered to be outside the system; Karen feels this results in inadequate communication, and she is often frustrated and even hindered in performing her job.

Warren cited the example of the soccer teams in which he has participated in Tokyo. He was at one time a member of a Japanese team – one of the three foreigners allowed according to the rules of the league. Warren seemed to accept the idea of quotas, which ensure that the presence of many talented foreign players will not deny Japanese players the chance to play with their local teams.

Warren was also a member of an all-foreigner team. After playing with both groups for some time, he decided to give up the Japanese team which, though, he enjoyed it, provided less challenge to him as an athlete. Though he appeared almost embarrassed to relate the next part of the story, Warren did feel it was worth pointing out. In the past, when Japanese members had left the team, a party had been held in their honor. "They didn't have a party for me. Sounds like sour grapes, doesn't it?"

It would be unfair to automatically attribute this small gesture – or lack thereof – as necessarily indicative of an unwillingness on the part of the team to accept Warren as a regular member and to treat him accordingly. It is possible that other factors prevented them from organizing a party for Warren. Still, it is difficult not to make the assumption that his nationality and resultant "outsiderness" bore some influence on the team's behavior.

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that the team of non-Japanese with whom Warren continued to play has found it impossible, according to league rules, to play against any of the Japanese teams in the league.

Given interviewees' negative feelings about provincialism and insider mentality, it is surprising that Karen and Warren should have been alone in providing specific evidence of groups that had not accepted them, and where they might wish to be considered legitimate members. The explanation that presented itself was perhaps the most powerful discovery to emerge from my study of the role of *gaijin*. Paul said it well:

> When I hear young WASP teachers in Japan comparing the word *gaijin* to, for example, nigger, I think it's greatly exaggerated. Nigger has a lot of negative connotations. Blacks don't have a lot of opportunity, whereas whites probably have more opportunity than standard Japanese. We're given deferential treatment, if anything, because of our differences.

Nearly all interviewees echoed Paul's view that, while an exclusionary attitude is, in principle, undesirable or even unacceptable from an American point of view, this is

compensated and perhaps even outweighed by the advantages of being a *gaijin* in Japan. This thought had never occurred to me before I arrived – that it might actually be desirable to remain outside the group. Several interviewees stated their views on the issue in rather blunt terms. Said Genna,

> To tell you the truth, I don't mind always being on the outside, because I don't think this is a culture I want to be on the inside of. As an interculturalist, I can say 'it's not good or bad, it's just their way,' but I can't say that I like it and want to be it. I would never want to have been born a Japanese person, man or woman. I don't envy what they have.

Max's attitude is yet more cynical.

> If they invited me to join the group, I wouldn't want to. Call me an outsider and pay me $50/hour, sure. If they paid me less, I wouldn't stay.

Why are they not interested in deeply penetrating the culture? Interviewees generally agreed on numerous cultural differences which they perceive as disadvantages to living as a Japanese. These included rigid gender roles, the treatment of women, excessive demands upon working males, treatment of Japanese employees, housing conditions, and suppression of individuality and free expression. It is not possible to list here all the possible factors; furthermore, a complete analysis of these factors leads to a discussion of the social organization of Japanese society that is too complex to be addressed here. The message, however, is clear. "I don't mind being an outsider, because I wouldn't want to be a Japanese."

Not only did the interviewees consider it undesirable to be like Japanese or a part of their in-group, they felt, on the contrary, in Max's words, that they "get a lot of bonus points for being a *gaijin*." Max cited the friendliness, the salary, and the respect that he feels are accorded to non-Japanese. Warren quoted a friend who, when asked what he would miss when he left Japan, said, "I'll miss people telling me I'm handsome, I'm smart and I speak Japanese well." The advantages most often cited by interviewees include the respect accorded to foreigners, the freedom to operate according to one's own rules for

appropriate behavior rather than those prescribed by society, and the very American desire to be unique.

The foreigner's position in Japan is perhaps a bit ironic; he/she may be an outsider, but is in many situations treated with considerable respect. It is crucial to note, as a number of interviewees did, that this respect is generally accorded to Caucasian, Western foreigners, who tend to enjoy better treatment than other non-Japanese. (The disturbing issue of the treatment in Japan of minority groups other than Caucasian Westerners is, unfortunately, outside the scope of this study.) In addition, all interviewees hold or have held at one time the elevated rank of *sensei* (teacher), "a high honorific for which we English speakers have no true equivalent. It means master, doctor, honcho" (McInerney 1985, 17). This respected role of *sensei* dictates, to a certain extent, a person's treatment, regardless of his/her nationality. Though the majority of interviewees were by no means this specific, Jay's words conveyed a sense of the teacher's position and treatment.

> Students are anything from polite to cow-towing with the *sensei*. It goes to your head. They're great students, because they always show that respect, whether they actually have it or not. What else can you ask for?

A second perceived advantage is the freedom to play by one's own rules. In a society where hierarchies are clearly established and behavior at both professional and social levels is often strictly dictated, non-Japanese said they were content to remain outside the system. According to Tara, "you can choose your level of involvement, your degree of responsibility. There have been times when people didn't want to keep me on the outside, and I felt overwhelmed. I didn't want to be as involved as they wanted me to be." This, she said, is not the norm. As a non-Japanese, she feels, one usually has the freedom to avoid situations where appropriate behavior is too rigidly proscribed. Furthermore, if one fails to behave appropriately according to the dictates of the system, not being Japanese is

an acceptable excuse for such a deviation. This holds true in both professional and social settings. It is accepted and even expected for non-Japanese to operate outside the rules.

Finally, several interviewees pointed out that while uniqueness may equal separateness in Japanese culture, this uniqueness is often rewarded. "Any of the situations I put myself in day to day," said Abby, "are ones where they want me to be there, and where I'm rewarded for being a different kind of person." "I'm here for a purpose," said Paul, "and being paid for and congratulated on doing what I'm doing, I think, fairly well. . . ." Certainly as language teachers and intercultural trainers, our uniqueness is part of what qualifies us to do our work.

Several interviewees made comments which reminded me that, to be unique, whether or not it serves a practical purpose in a given setting, is perceived as a desirable quality in American culture. Warren pointed out that non-Japanese often use the word *gaijin* to refer to themselves, "as if we want to be different, to set ourselves apart." Tara explained, "sometimes it's nice not to just dissolve into the masses. Sometimes it would be nice to be able to, too. But it can be nice to know that you stand out a little bit."

A desire to be unique was discussed in greater depth by three interviewees, using the term "marginality." These three interculturalists pointed out that those who choose to live abroad and who do so successfully are necessarily people able to tolerate existing on the periphery of a culture, rather than as part of the in-group. In fact, such individuals may not simply tolerate but in fact even thrive on what the interviewees referred to as a "marginal" existence. Several interviewees pointed out that while they felt they were outsiders in Japan, they had considered themselves outsiders in their own culture as well. Said Jon, "I'm not much more alienated here than I was at home."

On the issue of feeling like an outsider, Mark again stood apart from the others. "I don't really feel like I'm on the outside of anything," he said. Though he wrote in his own

essay that for interconnected reasons of language and culture, it is impossible for a non-Japanese to fully penetrate Japanese society, he did not feel that he was missing anything. Though he admitted that some aspects of Japanese culture would always be inaccessible to a non-Japanese, he questioned what it meant to be "inside" the culture. What he perceived as important was being "inside" and accepted in a group of individuals to whom he related well. As he felt he had attained this, he did not feel left out in any way.

"Uniqueness" and "marginality" are subjective terms and perhaps difficult to evaluate precisely. Nonetheless, it may be significant enough to know that a given individual operates, consciously or subconsciously, within this type of self-perception. If, in fact, this tolerance for marginality exists within a majority of foreigners living abroad, their ability to accept the role of *gaijin* in Japan ceases to be such a mystery.

VIII. QUOTES

Pages 76 and 77 of Appendix A, consist of a list of quotes, mostly excerpts from fiction and non-fiction, on the subject of Americans' experiences living in Japan. Interviewees were asked to read these quotes and comment on those that had particular meaning for them. They were encouraged to express agreement, disagreement, empathy for the authors, or any other reaction the quotes might provoke. Interviewees were also free to refrain from comment on particular quotes as they wished.

Though all of the quotes elicited interesting reactions, I will focus here on only three, which yielded responses most closely related to themes discussed elsewhere in the research analysis. These are:

> The enthusiasts wanted to please. . . . [They] connected with Japan. I did not. (Shapiro 1989, 4-5)

> I'd like to lend a bit of advice: Don't let the door hit you in the butt on the way out. If life in Japan is really so oppressive, then go. Leave. Go back to Chicago or Moose-Breath, or wherever, and reform those places. Nobody's listening to you here. (Barrow 1992)

> But they were Professional Foreigners, those who could dazzle an audience with their fluent Japanese and knowledge of local customs, but who were nonetheless portrayed by their hosts as something akin to dancing bears. "How long have you been in Japan? Twenty-six years? Do you like Japanese food? Can you eat with chopsticks? How very dexterous of you." (Shapiro 1989, 19)

It should be noted that I prefaced the reading of the quotes with only a brief explanation that these excerpts expressed the reactions of a variety of people to living in Japan. Only when an interviewee was completely unable to grasp the quote as taken out of context, or when I perceived a gross misinterpretation of the author's meaning, did I provide further background or explanation. As a result, interviewees approached the

quotes from a variety of angles and responded to them based on personal interpretations of the messages they contain. This was intentional on my part, as part of the interest in the exercise lay in observing which quotes and which elements of the quotes provoked reactions from each individual.

The enthusiasts wanted to please. . . . [They] connected with Japan. I did not. (Shapiro 1989, 4-5)

(Four interviewees either passed over this quote or made comments not relevant to the issue put forth.)

Of the ten interviewees who responded, one simply stated that the quote was "probably accurate." Five identified personally with the idea of wanting or needing to "please." Mick and Melissa, for example, said a desire to please had long been characteristic of them in their relationships with their parents. Melissa, Tara and Genna each stated specific reasons for wanting to "succeed" in Japan, and believed their ability to succeed depended at least in part upon their ability to please. To Melissa and Genna, pleasing meant "becoming Japanese." Genna said that she now realizes she does not have to "be" Japanese, but simply to "find a balance." Melissa, on the other hand, describes herself as 50% American, but 50% Japanese when she feels a given situation requires that of her. In both cases, the interviewees wanted to "succeed" in Japan, whatever this means to them, and felt that success was dependent on being able to please the members of the host country. Tara, too, said she came here wanting to please. She arrived in Japan immediately after a difficult year living in China, and was prepared to do whatever was necessary to "make things work" in Japan.

Jeremy and Mick asserted that, in Japan, a willingness to try to please is, indeed, essential to fitting in. Mick observed that tolerant, docile people tend to be better suited to living here.

> That's as a rule, and there are exceptions. I have been called an enthusiast, and have been attacked for being a sycophant and a brown-nose and an apologist. And I've struggled with those charges, because to a certain extent they're true. There's something in my character that the person may have misread, but there's a certain amount of adaptation and acceptance of Japan and things Japanese that you have to have. Japan demands that you bend over backward, demands total compliance. It's very rigid. There are some things you may hate, but everybody hates those things. Even the Japanese hate some aspects of life here. You have to really want to succeed and survive here if you're going to. And if you don't connect, then you don't.

It is of significance that Jeremy felt he had tried to please during his first two stays in Japan, and that his willingness to go along with things enabled him to be accepted and to live here comfortably. He said he is no longer willing to accept the status quo, and plans to return to the U.S.A. where he feels he will have the freedom he needs to be politically active and outspoken.

Whereas the above comments speak to the first part of the quote, other interviewees focused on the second portion – the idea of establishing a connection to Japanese culture. Karen stated simply that she wished she could connect with Japan, but felt that she did not. She saw an inability to communicate as the primary impediment to connecting. Paul, on the other hand, felt it was quite possible to connect with Japan, but that this connection need not be attained through efforts to "please." The quote, he said, "rubbed him the wrong way."

> This reminds me of things I heard, especially in my earlier years here, from people who had a negative experience in Japan. They tended to put people who had positive experiences in a box, which I resented. I don't think it's true that people who have a good experience do so just because they try to please people here . . . as if that were the primary means to have a good experience. I think there are lots of reasons why people have good experiences here.

Max agreed with Paul that aiming to please does not bring connection to the culture. His overall view, however, was completely different from Paul's. He was adamant in asserting that connection with Japanese culture is simply not attainable.

> This is bullshit. Nobody connects with Japan. How could you, just through enthusiasm?

I pointed out here that the term in the quote was in fact "enthusiasts," not "enthusiasm." Max continued:

> O.K., but wanting to please is no basis for connections. [Shapiro] is saying people who wanted to please got [positive] strokes from the Japanese and it's a mutual admiration society. Bullshit.

Needless to say, Max has not aimed to please in Japan. Neither has Jon aimed to please--in Japan or anywhere else. For him, an ability or inability to connect is not a function of culture.

> I'm not interested in pleasing in America, either. I'm not much more alienated here than I was there. People complain about how hard it is to make friends and get into Japanese society, but I've never cared. If people don't want to know me, that's all right. I've been invited by students and taken advantage of the opportunity, but I've never met Japanese people that I have enough of an affinity with to pursue it. So to me it's not a question of whether they're Japanese or not, it's how much we have in common – individual to individual more than culture to culture.

Jon's response is indicative of the concept of marginality discussed on page 48. If he sees no need to try to please, perhaps it is simply because he is content to live without a particular connection to the dominant culture. At other points in his interview, Jon explained that not only did he not particularly connect with any of the Japanese he had met, he had also not found a comfortable niche in the international community. It was my impression that while Jon, like others, sought out people with which to associate, he tended to focus primarily on developing a small number of close personal relationships, rather than feeling a need to fit into a larger, pre-established group.

All who reacted to this first quote were able to express clear views on the subject of pleasing in Japan or connecting with the culture. I was fascinated to find that not one questioned the meaning of the key words "please" and "connect." They responded as if there could be no ambiguity as to the author's use of the two terms.

It is my interpretation that those who expressed a desire to "please" interpreted the term to mean adjusting one's behavior in order to be accepted by the Japanese – learning

what was expected of them and going along with this so as not to ruffle any feathers. Those who were willing to please seemed to view this as a means by which to be accepted at some level by Japanese people. Some of those not willing to please seemed to feel either that adjusting one's behavior in order to fit in represents a betrayal of one's true self. Others felt that trying to please the Japanese is not the way to be accepted, if acceptance is what is desired. Others still simply felt that it is impossible to be accepted, so why bother. These issues are discussed further in Sections VII and IX.

I'd like to lend a bit of advice: Don't let the door hit you in the butt on the way out. If life in Japan is really so oppressive, then go. Leave. Go back to Chicago or Moose-Breath, or wherever, and reform those places. Nobody's listening to you here. (Barrow 1992)

The parallel to my stated motivation for conducting this research should be evident in this quote. Why, indeed, do people who feel "oppressed" by life in Japan continue to live here? I, too, have quickly tired of listening to the litany of complaints. Would it not be better for these people to just go?

Over half of the interviewees agreed completely or to a point with Barrow's view. Some, like Abby, reacted strongly.

> I have no sympathy for people who grouse about being in Japan. If you don't like it, you should leave. Nobody's forcing you to be here. It's just greed. It's for money. It's pathetic. I'm sick of hearing it. Whatever you want, you can find here.

The others who agreed stated that they, too, had had enough of listening to other foreigners' complaints.

On the other hand, this same group of interviewees were themselves able to generate a considerable list of negative points about living in Japan. Granted, each had been called upon to provide these negatives. The interview results give no indication of whether or how often the interviewees actively complain about the issues they listed. It nonetheless gave me pause to note that only one interviewee placed herself on the receiving end of this

quote. "Though I bitch about Japan, I don't want to go," said Karen. "This quote does make me think. Maybe I should go home. Or shut up."

It is safe to assume that every foreigner has complained at one time or another about something in Japan. I assume then, that "the complainers" in question in this discussion are people who dwell, to a point deemed excessive, on the negative aspects of life here. The suggestion that people go home seems to be based on the assumption that people who complain excessively must be unhappy, and that if they are unhappy here, they should go to a place where they can be happy. Genna suggested that "those who are most verbal about not liking Japan are probably the kind of people who are not going to like it anywhere. 'Where did you leave?' " she asked. " 'Did you say the same things about that place?' "

Genna and several others commented on what they perceived as the complainers' futile desire to change the things they complain about. In Jon's words,

> It's futile, I think, to bitch too much. I learned long ago that head-on confrontations are a waste of time, at best. Individuals are going to change their minds on their own – or not. You're not going to convince them by haranguing. It just causes bad feelings.

Genna felt that people planning to come to Japan should be told "if you even think you're going to make any changes . . . don't even come here if that's your bag."

Jeremy quite disagreed. He, in fact, wrote a letter to the editor in response to Mr. Barrow's. Quoting from Jeremy's letter:

> I fail to see how constructive criticism and political action . . . can but help make Japan a better place to live. . . . The answer is not a black-and-white choice between 'putting up with it' or 'leaving the country.' Although it may be an uncomfortable – and at times painful – process, finding a solution that is beneficial to all should be the ultimate goal. . . . Some of the conveniences and freedoms we now enjoy in Japan would not be possible if everyone had followed Barrow's advice and remained silent instead of speaking out.

It is only fair to remind the reader that Jeremy's response was based on having read Mr. Barrow's editorial and the previously written letters to the editor to which his was a

response. It is possible that the other interviewees, given more background information, would have responded differently to Mr. Barrow's quote. Warren did make the point that simply verbalizing one's grievances is not the way to effect change. However, he said, neither is giving up and leaving the country. Like Jeremy, Warren advocated taking action to resolve the issues one complains about. Action, he said, is the key to resolving issues. Warren also acknowledged, however, that many who have tried to effect change here have met with considerable resistance.

Not to be sidetracked, however, the point in quoting Jeremy's letter is to call into question the assumption that people who complain about Japan, even a great deal, are truly unhappy. We cannot know, without asking individuals, whether people are complaining out of unhappiness. I simply wish to put forth for consideration the possibility that the complainers Mr. Barrow refers to are no different from those interviewees who feel that, as Paul said, "there's plenty to complain about in Japan," but who are satisfied with enough of the other elements of their lifestyles that leaving the country is in no way the ideal solution to their various frustrations.

Is it not possible, also, that complaining is simply a vehicle for releasing stress and frustration with, in some cases, trivial matters, so that one can put those matters behind and go on? Or on an even more positive note, is it not possible that for some people, complaining about various aspects of Japanese culture is simply their way of observing cultural difference? It has been observed earlier that the members of the international community are generally drawn to differentness or uniqueness. Perhaps the complainers have simply chosen a negative form of expression to show that they are intrigued or puzzled by their surroundings. Their words may not be intended as a judgment, positive or negative, but simply a form of observation.

For some people, complaining may simply be a way of making conversation. Bonds are formed based on things we have in common with others; it is reasonable to assume that some people complain with the expectation that fellow foreigners feel the same way and will welcome the opportunity to talk about their shared annoyances or frustrations.

Complaining, then, may in fact serve any one of a number of purposes, depending upon who is doing the complaining. Where one person may be crying out for change, another may simply be getting a pet peeve off his chest, and yet another simply trying to connect with a fellow foreigner. And certainly, any number of other motivations have not been discussed here.

I find this analysis difficult to conclude, for the simple reason that I see no absolute conclusions. The matter under discussion is a highly personal one, and can be analyzed fully only by studying the feelings and motivations of individuals. My conclusion can only be, then, that some of "the complainers" should go home. Some should stay here and shut up. Some should shut up around those who do not want to listen, and speak up to those who can either help rectify a problem or sympathize over the fact that there is no solution. Perhaps it is something like giving a speech or doing a piece of writing – know your audience, and choose your words accordingly. Or in the words of Pat Moran of the School for International Training (S.I.T.), "know yourself." In a teacher-training course on teaching culture, held at S.I.T. in 1991 , Moran suggested that knowing oneself is a crucial factor in approaching another culture. So, then, know yourself, know why you have negative things to say, and act as your knowledge of yourself and your needs tells you is best.

But they were Professional Foreigners, those who could dazzle an audience with their fluent Japanese and knowledge of local customs, but who were nonetheless portrayed by their hosts as something akin to dancing bears. "How long have you been in Japan? Twenty-six years? Do you like

Japanese food? Can you eat with chopsticks? How very dexterous of you. (Shapiro 1989, 19)

Again interviewees fell into categories in responding. The first group focused on the "professional foreigners" famous among Japanese and non-Japanese alike for their appearances on television talk shows and game shows, where they converse with other television personalities in flawless Japanese. It should be remembered that no specific individuals were specified in the discussion of "professional foreigners," and that each interviewee's comments refer to the people he or she considers to be a part of that group.

Responses from the five interviewees in the first group were uniformly negative. Genna, though jealous of the foreign television personalities' proficiency in Japanese, felt there was "something wrong" with the role of these "professional foreigners." She felt they were in some way being used. Others saw the "professional foreigners" not as victims, but rather as "phonies," and even "slime." Said Melissa:

> I really hate them. It's true, they're the ones who are different, and they can do the Japan thing. They're fluent in Japanese. But they're still not part of the culture. People look at them as even more of an aberration than us, who are struggling. Because Japanese have it in their mind from the beginning that Japanese is unlearnable, and that "you can't get into our culture." So they feel very uncomfortable with people who actually do. They don't like them any more than they like us.

The second group responded with regard to the "professional foreigners" one encounters in everyday life. These are presumably foreigners fluent in Japanese who, due to their language skills, interact and function in their environment without difficulties readily visible to other non-Japanese. Comments from this second group did not extend much beyond a matter-of-fact acknowledgement that, yes, such people do exist.

The largest group of respondents, however, reacted on a rather personal level – not to the idea of "professional foreigners" but to the term "dancing bears," and to the comments about eating Japanese food and using chopsticks. This group discussed the extent to which

they feel all foreigners are treated by the Japanese as "dancing bears." Stephen echoed the description in Melissa's quote above:

> Part of their brain can't accept the fact that [non-Japanese] can actually speak their language or like their food or handle chopsticks.

It can be a struggle to resist the temptation to answer "Can you use chopsticks?!" with a snappy "Can you use a fork?!" I have heard and participated in countless conversations among non-Japanese trying to think of a perfect comeback for that dreaded question.

This attitude, though, presumes that the Japanese are insulting our intelligence or ability in expressing amazement at our understanding or mastery of elements of their culture. Mark presented an alternative explanation for the recurrence of the chopstick query. He does not view the question as an insult nor feel that it reflects an attitude of condescension. He sees it as just another form of politeness.

> In Japan, there's a proper thing to say at a proper time. You use a certain form of politeness when you speak to someone, and a different form of politeness when you speak to someone else. When someone says this, you say that. If you say *domo arigato gozaimashita*, someone says *doitashimashite*. It's just phrases you automatically say in those situations. With a foreigner, you automatically say "Can you use chopsticks?"

Another possible explanation can be found in the discussion of insider mentality in Section VII. To the extent that non-Japanese demonstrate non-Japanese behavior, they are classifiable as members of an outside group. But from the moment that a non-Japanese demonstrates understanding or ability in some domain perceived by the Japanese as unique to their culture, the classification of the individual involved becomes ambiguous. Perhaps, as Melissa stated, such people are perceived in some way as "aberrations." Perhaps something like the following goes through the observer's mind: "If, as we suspect, it is impossible for outsiders to penetrate our culture, then what I am seeing can be only a sort of performance. It is a mimicking of Japanese behavior, but of course cannot reflect an

actual understanding of the aspects of Japanese culture which lie beneath the surface." Hence the description "dancing bear."

Warren commented on the tendency of many Japanese to marvel at the language proficiency of a non-Japanese, based sometimes on the person's utterance of as little as a one-word sentence such as *sumimasen* (excuse me).

> They're not really saying that I'm good at Japanese – which I'm not. They're saying, "Oh! You're making an attempt to speak the most difficult language in the world, which I speak fluently. It doesn't matter what you say in Japanese, I'm going to have the same response."

The "compliment," Warren believes, is not a response to his doing <u>well</u> something that is considered uniquely Japanese; it is a response to his having managed, from outside the cultural wall, to do this thing at all.

Respondents were unanimous in their dislike of the "dancing bear" phenomenon. On the other hand, the issue seemed more of an annoyance than a major point of contention. Jon explained, "It's not an issue with me any more. Maybe something to joke about, occasionally. I've sort of assimilated this a long time ago, the view of foreigners as exotic animals." Mick has developed strategies for coping. "I'm pretty good at reading Japanese people and seeing if this is what they want [i.e., for him to play the role of "professional foreigner" or dancing bear]. I'm good at weeding these people out, so I don't have to deal with them too much any more." This comment from Mick makes the important point that the reaction to foreigners as freaks or exotic animals is by no means found in all Japanese. As with all stereotypes, this view has developed from a very real behavior observed by a large number of people. Let there be no misunderstanding, however. This interviewer and undoubtedly countless others have encountered Japanese who would undoubtedly be as irritated by this type of behavior as are the foreigners themselves.

IX. CONCLUSIONS

In drawing global conclusions from the research, two distinct categories emerged. I would suggest that the factors influencing the interviewees, and perhaps others like them, to stay in Japan for three years or more can be divided into 1) Japanese-culture-specific factors and 2) internal, personal factors. The first set of conclusions concerns those areas of the research where interviewees' attitudes and behaviors were influenced most significantly by facets of Japanese culture. This is the kind of information I had originally anticipated the research would yield. The second set of conclusions involves areas of the research where the character of each individual played a far greater role in dictating attitudes and behaviors than did specific elements of Japanese culture. As mentioned in the introduction, the primary source of peoples' responses to their situations in Japan often proved to be their own personalities and past experiences.

Let us look, first, at the two areas in which Japanese culture seems to have the greatest impact -- learning the Japanese language and the possibility (or impossibility) of being accepted as a part of Japanese society.

While learning the language of one's host country might normally seem to have obvious advantages, I have highlighted the fact that this element of the acculturation process in Japan comes attached to a unique set of expectations and ramifications. It is true here, as elsewhere, that individual needs, values, interests and personalities necessarily come into play where language learning is concerned. The decision to learn a language or not depends in part upon the view of oneself as a language learner, the perceived importance of language-learning in adapting to one's cultural environment, intrinsic interest in the language, and a host of other factors discussed in detail in Section VI. In addition to

these personal considerations, the approach of the individual to language learning in Japan must certainly be affected by Japanese peoples' attitudes toward the language they speak.

Historically, it was long-forbidden for non-Japanese to study the Japanese language. While this has not been the case for many years, this historical precedent has ramifications today. Some sociologists argue that in Japan more than in other countries, language is considered by many to be equivalent to nationality; in other words, to be Japanese, one must speak Japanese, and vice versa. If this view is accurate, a foreigner who tries to learn the language may be perceived not as showing respect for the people and culture, but rather as an invader trying to become something he/she is not and can never be – a Japanese person. The bond between language and culture in Japan creates a barrier that non-Japanese do not easily cross (Segerlund 1990, 10). As discussed in Section VI, this and other culture-based disincentives represent one way in which Japanese culture itself affects non-Japanese in their attitudes and behaviors as residents of Japan.

Language learning as part of the acculturation process is closely tied to the second area of discussion – the extent to which non-Japanese can be accepted into Japanese society. Warren reflected on a previous stay in Mexico, where he felt his ability to interact and establish relationships with Mexican people was enhanced by his ability to communicate in Spanish. In Warren's view, Japan is unique in what he described as an unwillingness to accept a foreigner's ability to communicate in the local language as a step toward understanding, interacting with and integrating into the culture.

Warren's reference to Japan as a unique country is a comfortable view for many Japanese people. It is their own long-held perception of Japan as unique, incomprehensible, impenetrable and homogeneous that has undoubtedly contributed to maintaining a distinct *gaijin* domain for non-Japanese. Yet, one can quickly discover, either by studying the question or by simply looking around, that Japan is anything but a

homogeneous nation. Minority groups exist here; after suffering in relative silence through years of discrimination, many are now becoming more vocal and more visible. From Japan-born people of Korean descent to the indigenous Ainu, activist groups are taking a stronger stand in demanding recognition and rights as part of this nation and culture.

It would be inappropriate to draw a direct comparison between these groups and Americans or other Western foreigners, as their situation, and therefore their needs and grievances, are not the same as ours. They, too, are perceived by the majority as being different from most Japanese, even those born and raised in Japan. As Westerners, we too may find ourselves excluded. In our case, however, this is balanced to some extent by the privileges described in Section VII that are enjoyed by Caucasian Westerners more than by other minority groups.

The point in the above which relates to this study lies neither in proving that Japan is heterogeneous, nor in outlining the specific grievances of a particular minority group. The interviewees have grown accustomed to many forms of discrimination, and most said they have developed coping mechanisms. Though still angered by discriminatory acts, they are less deeply affected by the actions themselves than by the beliefs and attitudes that they feel such actions reflect. Provincialism, elitism, and categorization of people based on nationality are generally considered by interviewees to be unattractive, disturbing qualities which run directly counter to Japan's often-proclaimed desire to "internationalize." Many of the attitudes of mainstream Japanese continue to reflect the myth of Japan as a homogeneous nation. Until this belief is modified, the tendency to isolate foreigners and to set mental limits on the possibility and the desirability of these people's integration into Japanese society will continue.

My conclusion on this matter, then, is that those who come to Japan and stay are those able to cope on the receiving end of the considerable biases that currently prevail in

much of Japanese society. I have discussed the concept of marginality and the fact that those who succeed abroad have a tolerance for existing outside the mainstream of the society in which they live. It is those individuals who do not rely on acceptance by the majority group, those able to identify their personal needs and to find ways to fulfill them who can make a comfortable place for themselves and lead personally satisfying lives as non-Japanese in Japan.

This leads directly to my second set of conclusions – those based on personal rather than national culture. Line one of the introduction states that human beings tend to seek membership in communities. I have further asserted that Japanese society is currently not structured to make full acceptance possible for non-Japanese or members of non-mainstream groups. And yet, we have been discussing a group of Americans who have found Japan a satisfactory place to live. At the risk of angering some readers, I would suggest that for those who find satisfaction here and who choose to stay in Japan for an extended period, Japanese culture itself often has little to do with the matter.

Evidence for this is easily found in the content of the interviews. What strikes me most is the absence, except in the two areas discussed above, of Japan-specific explanations for why people feel the way they do about being in this country. The charts in Section IV, not discussed in detail up to now, outline the positive and negative features of life in Japan most frequently cited by interviewees in direct response to the question "What are the three most significant positive and negative features for you about living in Japan?" Though the responses did not always include some of the other positive or negative features that interviewees discussed at greater length at other points in the interview, an analysis is nonetheless revealing.

It is particularly interesting to note that the negative points listed are features of Japan itself. For example, the crowding, ugliness and lack of greenery in Tokyo are direct

commentaries on elements of the interviewees' surroundings which they find undesirable. The language barrier, too, while it exists in any foreign culture, may be viewed as a uniquely Japan-related concern in light of previous analysis of language issues in this country. Comments on a lack of independent thinking, provinciality and narrow-mindedness are likewise specifically directed at elements of Japanese society and culture.

Let us compare these to some of the positive features listed – specifically, jobs, money, and the international community. Certainly all of these are attainable in Japan. Yet none is uniquely a part of Japanese culture. As it happens, these things have become available to the interviewees in Japan. Yet they could not be described as Japanese.

I do not mean to overlook other elements on the two lists which run contrary to the above. For example, safety, on the positive list, should be recognized as a very positive attribute of Japanese society. The low crime rate is deserving of pride, and is appealing to those looking for a place to live in an age of worldwide violence. Likewise, it is clear that, on the negative list, Japan is not alone in presenting such problems as crowding and language barriers.

Nonetheless, one cannot deny that three of the four positive factors cited as most significant and discussed at greatest length by interviewees are in fact quite separate from Japanese culture. It would be absurd to deny that people are influenced by and react to their experiences with Japanese culture. On the other hand, it is striking to note the degree to which elements having little to do directly with Japanese culture determined individual attitudes and behaviors in response to living in Japan.

These elements can be broken down into the tangible and the emotional. On the tangible side are those factors discussed in Section V--namely, opportunities for professional challenge, financial reward, and membership in the international community. These emerged as clearly the most important factors keeping people in Japan. However, as

these factors are by no means uniquely Japanese, they could presumably be transplanted to other countries where the interviewees might be equally willing to stay for extended periods to enjoy the same rewards.

Several interviewees agreed with the view that their being satisfied to stay here had little to do with Japan, even some who would at one point have described themselves as Japan enthusiasts. Yet, when discussing this issue, they did not refer to the tangible rewards discussed above. Their view of the issue tended, rather, to come across in more philosophical comments on the pursuit of happiness. Several interviewees pointed out that happiness or unhappiness, group membership or alienation can happen anywhere. According to Stephen:

> It's not up to the Japanese, it's up to the individual. It's that way no matter what language you're speaking, no matter where you are. If you want to make individual contact, if you want to talk about things that are important, you can find people who are willing to do that. I don't know how 'inside' you have to be. If you have good friends, if you feel good about your life, what difference does it make where you are?

Others pointed out that Japan is merely a setting like any other which brings out tendencies that already exist within individuals. Melissa phoned me several days after our interview to relate a story told to her by her father. The story went something like the following:

> A man was sitting on a fence at the side of the road outside a town. Another man, travelling with his family, stopped to talk to the man on the fence. "Excuse me," said the traveler. "Could you tell me what this town is like? I'm moving here with my family." "Certainly," said the man on the fence. "But tell me first -- what was it like where you came from?" "Oh, terrible," said the traveler. "The town was awful and the people were nasty. We were miserable there." "I see," said the man on the fence. "Well, I'm afraid you won't be any happier here. This town is exactly like that." The traveler and his family went on their way.
>
> Shortly thereafter, a second traveler passed by with his family. He, too, stopped to talk to the man on the fence. "Excuse me," said the second traveler. "Could you tell me what this town is like? I'm moving here with my family." "Certainly," said the man on the fence. "But tell me first – what was it like where you came from?" "Oh, wonderful," said the second traveler. "The town was beautiful, and the people were very kind. We loved living there, and we were very sorry to

> leave." "I see," said the man on the fence. "Well, I think you and your family will be very happy here. This town is exactly like that."

The moral of the story was echoed in the words of several interviewees – one can find contentment, or discontentment anywhere. It is a matter of personal choice.

Several interviewees described their pursuit of personal satisfaction by dividing their lives into a sort of pie chart, wherein various elements of their lifestyles are represented. Finding satisfaction depends, then, upon finding ways to fulfill the needs represented by each portion of the pie. Angela's "pie," for example, consists of work, church, and home. The activities, personal relationships and spiritual fulfillment that these provide are sufficient for Angela to be satisfied with her lifestyle. Her contact with Japanese people and culture is relatively limited. Angela pointed out that she sets up her life in this way in any country she lives in.

The above examples illustrate well the conclusion that non Japan-specific factors play a significant role in determining satisfaction with one's life in this country. This may be surprising, given the strong national identity in Japan and the extreme cultural differences between Japanese and American culture. At the start of the research, I would have expected this complex culture to impact foreigners much more directly than it seems to. However, the enormity of the cultural gap may itself be the reason why people rely on factors tangential to the culture in their pursuit of contentment here. In a country where bridging the cultural gap is particularly difficult, devising other ways of adapting and finding contentment is essential. Those who know themselves well enough to identify their essential needs and who make the effort to find ways of meeting those needs can find contentment in Japan – or anywhere else.

What, then, of the issue of unhappiness cited in the introduction to the research? This study was prompted by a desire to discover why seemingly unhappy people stayed for years in a presumably unhappy environment. The question arose from observations of

foreigners who felt they were outsiders in Japanese society, who did not speak the language of the country they lived in, and who generally complained a great deal about the country they lived in and the people among whom they lived. It was my assumption that these were signs of unhappiness.

As a result of this research and analysis, I would now suggest that the people I interviewed, and perhaps many members of the group that they represent, are in fact not unhappy. Like human beings in any situation, these people vent their discontent and frustration – and there is considerable discontent and frustration associated with living in Japan. This point was discussed at greater length in the analysis of interviewees' responses to the quote from Mr. Barrow (pages 54 to 57). There are, however, sources of satisfaction and reward as well, including those pieces of each individual's pie chart discussed earlier. These are sources of satisfaction that we probably hear less about unless we probe for them. It is perhaps human nature to be more vocal about the negative around us than the positive. It is the negative, not the positive that we feel a need to "get out of our system." So, while the complaints of teachers living in Japan are very real, probing into the lives of individuals revealed that, in the case of those who choose to stay, these complaints are outweighed by the rewards and joys of living in Japan.

What set out to be a study of responses to a cultural environment turned out to be at least as much a study of human nature and the ability of individuals to shape their own environments in a way that is comfortable for them.

This brings me to a final look at the role of Japan in this process of creating a satisfying existence. The point I would like to make has been alluded to earlier by those interviewees who commented that they enjoyed being *gaijin* to the extent that this role gives them the freedom not to play by the unwritten rules that so rigidly regulate the behavior of Japanese. It is quite extraordinary, really, to find a culture in which one's role is not

clearly identified, and where one can, therefore, dictate to a great extent one's own rules for thinking and behaving. I have suggested that Japan has little to do with providing a satisfying living environment for foreigners. I believe this is true with respect to elements present in Japanese culture. On the other hand, that which is absent for foreigners here, such as a clearly defined place in the social structure, strictly dictated rules for social conduct, and restrictions on establishment of priorities, use of time and general self-conduct, is indeed unique. Perhaps Japanese culture does not create a place for non-Japanese; however, the freedom that accompanies a lack of clear identity within the social structure allows people of a wide variety of personalities, backgrounds, interests and needs to carve out a place for themselves in a way that even their own culture may not make possible.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

NOTE: The following questions are to be addressed in an oral interview. The interviewee will not see the written page, except when asked to rate a number of elements according to a printed scale. Whether or not all the questions under each heading are asked, and the way in which they are asked, will differ from one interviewee to another, depending on how the interview develops. For example, the interviewee's answer to one question may eliminate the need to ask other questions in that category, necessitate a rewording of succeeding questions, or may lead to follow-up questions not listed here.

Length of Stay

Is this your first trip to Japan?

If not, how many previous trips have you made, and for how long?

Are you in Japan alone or with a partner?

When did you arrive in Japan this trip?

How long are you planning to stay?

How long did you originally plan to stay?

If you changed your plans, why?

Would you consider extending your stay again?

What factors might cause you to extend your stay or cut it short?

Language

Which languages do you speak?

What is your first language (or languages, if raised bilingual)?

Rate your fluency in all languages you speak, except Japanese:

1 - Native

2 - Superior

3 - Advanced

4 - Intermediate

5 - Novice

For each language other than your first language and Japanese, answer the following:

When did you learn the language?

How did you learn it?

Where did you learn it?

Why did you learn it?

Did you speak any Japanese before you came?

Do you speak any Japanese now?

Rate on the above scale your proficiency level in Japanese when you arrived here.

Rate on the above scale your current level of proficiency in Japanese.

Are you currently studying Japanese?

If not, why not?

If so, how long have you been studying?

Describe your current studies (do you attend classes, study independently, etc.)

Why did you decide to study Japanese?

Are you interested in continuing to study, or studying again in the future?

What is your proficiency goal in Japanese?

Rate your usage of Japanese in each of the settings below, using the percentages listed:

100% of the time	80% of the time	60% of the time	50% of the time
40% of the time	20% of the time	0% of the time	

Setting

Socially

At work (when not in class) for professional purposes

With colleagues for the sake of language practice, not for work purposes

In dealing with service encounters (e.g., making purchases, asking directions, etc.)

How do you feel about speaking Japanese?

Social Contacts/Contact with the Japanese

What is your work schedule?

Describe a typical week for you in Japan.

Describe your social life during your first year in Japan. (See questions below)

Do the same for your social life now. (See questions below)

What do you do when you are not at work?
Who do you spend time with when you are not at work?
Where do you go when you are not at work?
How do you feel about your social life?
In what way(s) is your social life in Japan similar to your social life at home?
In what way(s) is your social life in Japan different from your social life at home?
How do you feel about the similarities/differences?
If you are not satisfied with your social life, what would make it better?
What do you usually do to get yourself established in a new city and/or country?
What have you done in Japan?
How many of your close friends are Japanese?
How many of your acquaintances (defined as people you have seen at least twice on a social basis and expect to see again) are Japanese?
What percentage of your non-work time do you spend with Japanese?

Initial Motivation for Coming

Why did you come to Japan?
Which of these reasons was the most important for you? Why?
Where do the other reasons fall in order of importance?
Describe the process you went through in deciding to come to Japan, from the moment you first began to consider it to the moment you made your decision.
Did you have a job here before you arrived?
Did you have any contacts, friends, etc. here? Japanese, American or other (specify)?
Would you say that influenced your decision to come?
What other options were available to you when you chose to come to Japan?
Why did you choose Japan instead of another country?
Describe how other peoples' feelings, suggestions, etc. came into play in your decision-making. (Get separate responses for teachers, family members, colleagues, friends outside this field)
Did you talk to other teachers who had lived in Japan? What effect did they have on your decision?
Knowing what you know now, would you have made the decision to come?

Work Environment

Where do you work? (Public school, university, private language school, etc.) How long have you been working there?
Fill out the chart below with details of your past teaching experience:
(One for Japan, one for other)

Type of School

Private language institute
Conversation school
University
Junior College
High School
Junior High School
Elementary School
Other

Do you work full-time or part-time?
If part-time, do you work elsewhere?
Is teaching your career, or a temporary job while you are in this country?
How do you feel about your current job?
Describe your working environment (rate the facilities, resources, staff, management, scheduling, local and foreign colleagues on a 6-point scale: excellent, above-average, satisfactory, average, below average, unsatisfactory)
Describe your responsibilities at work.
Who do you work with most closely?
Who do you report to?
How do you feel about reporting to that person?
Do you feel challenged by your job?
Do you want to be challenged by your job?

Living Conditions

Where do you live? (Large city, small town, etc.)
How do you get to work?

How long does it take?
Describe your accommodations.
Did you choose your accommodations, or did your company make the arrangements?
What were your top three criteria in choosing your accommodations? (Size, location, attractiveness, price, living alone, convenience of making the necessary arrangements)
How do you feel about where you are living?
How do you refer to your accommodations in Japan?

Attitudes

Before coming to Japan, what was the strongest image you had of the country?
Name three positive elements and three negative elements you expected to find when you arrived.
Before coming to Japan, what was the strongest image you had of the people?
Name three positive elements and three negative elements you expected to find when you arrived.
What ideas did you have about working in Japan before you came?
Name three positive elements and three negative elements you expected to find when you arrived.
What were your hopes in terms of the life you would lead here?
What were your fears?
Have they been confirmed?
How do you feel about working with Japanese students?
How do you feel about working with Japanese colleagues?
How do you feel about working with other expatriate colleagues?
What advice would you give to a fellow teacher in the U.S.A. who was considering taking a job in Japan?
How do you feel about living in Japan?
Describe your attitude toward working in Japan before you came, at the beginning of your stay, and now.

Cross-Cultural Issues

What are the three things that you enjoy most about living/working here?
What are the three greatest sources of frustration, anger, disappointment, etc.?

Which do you think outweigh the others?
Do you feel you have any control over these factors/ability to change things that are a problem for you?
What have you done up to now to cope with such difficulties?
Do you think you are happier living here than you would be elsewhere? Why or why not?
What aspects of Japanese culture do you think affect you the most in your day-to-day existence?
How?

Future Plans

How do you expect your experience in Japan to affect your future life and work?
Do you think you will want/need to use Japanese after you leave Japan?
Once you have left Japan, do you think you will ever come back again for an extended stay? Why or why not? How does this compare with your feeling about returning to other countries you have lived in?

Comparing Your Japanese Experience with Other Experiences Abroad

What countries have you lived in before for a period of 1 year or more?
How do those experiences compare with your experience here?
(Look at factors such as motivation for going there, lifestyle while in the country, work situation, social situation, financial situation, language proficiency, establishing friends with people of that country, becoming involved in non-work groups and activities, degree of satisfaction with the experience.)

The "Gaijin" Factor

How do you feel about the word *gaijin* ?
How do you feel about the word as it applies to you?
How do you react when someone refers to you as a *gaijin* ?

How Do You Feel About the Following Quotes?

The enthusiasts wanted to please. . . . [They] connected with Japan. I did not (Shapiro 1989, 4-5).

I'd like to lend a bit of advice: Don't let the door hit you in the butt on the way out. If life in Japan is really so oppressive, then go. Leave. Go back to Chicago or Moose-Breath, or wherever, and reform those places. Nobody's listening to you here (Barrow 1992).

If you made the choice to stay in Canada, why do you have so little to do with Canada? Why have you learned so little about us? John: it's something of a joke, you know--how you don't even know your way around Toronto (Irving 1989, 239).

Hearn found in Matsue what he had never really looked for: contentment. He was content with his wife and his job. He was content with his home until it got too cramped and he decided to move (Shapiro 1989, 102).

. . . Armin could remember no time when he had felt more deeply that after so many years of patience, he had made a difference (Shapiro 1989, 84).

But they were Professional Foreigners, those who could dazzle an audience with their fluent Japanese and knowledge of local customs, but who were nonetheless portrayed by their hosts as something akin to dancing bears. "How long have you been in Japan? Twenty-six years? Do you like Japanese food? Can you eat with chopsticks? How very dexterous of you" (Shapiro 1989, 19).

He wanted to know Japan so well that he could offer explanations for hefty fees. This would truly make him stand apart, he believed, because Westerners who knew the Japanese intimately were rare. But to do so would require a deep immersion (Shapiro 1989, 23-24).

Despite all the unexpected familiarities (the brand names and slogans, the skyscrapers and game shows on television and *Time* and *Newsweek* on the newsstands), there [is] that

alien quality, which [gives] to all the similarities an unreal, pasted-together feel (Leithauser 1986, 121).

You fight so hard sometimes to say, "I'm from another country. Please accept me." And they're saying, "We're trying, too" (Shapiro 1989, 201).

And Tokyo Station was a horror. Signs were confusing, voices barked unintelligibly over loudspeakers, vast and misleading corridors radiated off toward limbo. And everywhere there were armies of blue- and gray-suited Japanese *sararimen* – "salary men" – stepping along with that seeming single-mindedness which unwantedly suggested an insect colony – ants or bees. (Leithauser 1986, 96)

As my Japanese gets better and better, I start to feel that I'm on my way to real communication with these people whose country I'm making my life in. I start to get excited. And then I remember that the words aren't enough. Even if I speak the language, I can never really get on the inside. Why would I want to stay in a place where the majority of the people around me intend to keep me on the outside, looking in? (Anonymous)

APPENDIX B

PRE-INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

General Information Regarding Your Stay in Japan

Is this your first stay in Japan?

If not, how many previous trips have you made, and for how long?

Are you in Japan alone or with a partner?

When did you arrive in Japan this trip?

How long are you planning to stay?

Languages

Is English your first language?

Which other languages do you speak?

Rate your fluency in languages other than your native language and Japanese:

1 - Native
2 - Superior
3 - Advanced
4 - Intermediate
5 - Novice

For each language other than your first language and Japanese:

When did you learn the language?

How did you learn it?

Where did you learn it?

Did you speak any Japanese before you came to Japan?

Do you speak any Japanese now?

Rate on the above scale your proficiency level in Japanese when you arrived here.

Rate on the above scale your current level of proficiency in Japanese.

Are you currently studying Japanese?

Rate the frequency of your usage of Japanese in each of the settings below, using the percentages listed.

100% of the time	80% of the time	60% of the time	50% of the time
40% of the time	20% of the time	0% of the time	

Setting

Socially

At work (when not in class) for professional purposes

With colleagues for the sake of language practice, not for work purposes

In dealing with service encounters
(e.g., making purchases, asking directions, etc.)

Work Environment

Where do you work? (Public school, university, private language school, etc.)

How long have you been working there?

Fill in the chart below with details of your past teaching experience:

Type of School
Private language institute
Conversation school
University
Junior College
High School
Junior High School
Elementary School
Other

Do you work full-time or part-time?

If part-time, do you work other jobs as well?

Living Conditions

Where do you live? (in the city, outside)

How do you get to work?

How long does it take?

Briefly describe your accommodations

Comparing Your Japanese Experience with Other Experiences Abroad

What countries have you lived in before for a period of 1 year or more?

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